

# **THE DEMOCRACY CLOCK EVENT LOG**

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A CONTEMPORANEOUS PUBLIC RECORD OF  
GOVERNANCE ACTIONS, JULY 2025-JANUARY 2026

JIM VINCENT

VINCENT PRESS

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This volume is a contemporaneous public record of governance actions affecting democratic institutions in the United States during Weeks 27–52 of the Democracy Clock project (July 19, 2025–January 16, 2026). It is intended for historical, journalistic, scholarly, and civic reference.

The events documented herein are drawn from publicly available sources, including government records, court filings, legislative actions, executive orders, and contemporaneous reporting. Inclusion of any event does not imply endorsement of any individual, institution, or viewpoint.

Every effort has been made to ensure accuracy at the time of publication. Given the evolving nature of public records, corrections, clarifications, or supplemental volumes may be published separately.

The author asserts the moral right to be identified as the author of this work.

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## CORRECTIONS NOTE

This volume is part of an ongoing public record.

Every effort has been made to ensure factual accuracy at the time of publication. Events documented in this book are drawn from publicly available primary sources and reputable contemporaneous reporting, and are recorded as they were known and verifiable at the time they occurred.

If a factual error is identified, corrections or clarifications may be issued in accordance with The Democracy Clock's Corrections & Amendments Policy. Where corrections are made, they are documented transparently and without erasing the original historical record.

Disagreements of interpretation, emphasis, or perspective do not constitute grounds for correction. This volume preserves what was recorded, when it was recorded, and why it mattered at the time.

The integrity of the record depends not on unanimity of interpretation, but on the stability and traceability of facts.



## VOLUME II SCOPE

This volume contains the second half of *The Democracy Clock: Events Log*, covering the period from July 19, 2025, through January 16, 2026. It documents Weeks 27 through 52 of the record, completing the first full year of weekly archival coverage. All weeks in this volume follow the standard Saturday–Friday structure and together constitute the latter half of the fifty-two-week record.



# INTRODUCTION

## HOW TO USE THIS RECORD

This volume serves as a public record. Between January 20, 2025, and July 18, 2025, the United States underwent a notably intense series of governance actions. These actions impacted democratic institutions, civil liberties, administrative norms, and the balance of power within the government. Many of these actions were lawful on their face. Some faced challenges. Others were unprecedented in their scale, speed, or scope. What made this period distinctive was not any single event but the cumulative pattern created by hundreds of individual decisions made over weeks and across agencies. This book is intended to preserve that pattern.

*The Democracy Clock Event Log* is not an argument, manifesto, or forecast. It is an archival document—a contemporaneous, week-by-week record of verifiable actions taken by public officials and institutions, based on primary sources and reputable reports. The record begins on the constitutional transition date of January 20, 2025; hence, the first week covers events from that date to Friday, January 24, 2025, and is shorter than the subsequent full Saturday–Friday weeks. Each following week is treated as a distinct historical unit. Each entry details what happened, when it occurred, who was involved, and why it was significant for democratic governance at the time.

Readers should understand what this volume is—and what it is not. It does not assign intent beyond what is explicitly stated in official documents or credible reports. It does not speculate about future outcomes. It does not score, rank, or compare events. Interpretation, synthesis, and evaluation are covered in companion volumes. This book’s role is narrower and more demanding: to ensure that the factual record exists, intact and usable, before

memory fades or narratives harden. The log's structure is deliberately consistent. Each week starts with a brief summary providing context and orientation. Events are grouped under stable governance categories—power and authority, institutions and governance, civil rights and dissent, economic structure, and information and memory—allowing readers to follow patterns over time within and across areas. Citations are included for each event to support verification and further research. This consistency is not stylistic. It is methodological.

Democratic erosion rarely announces itself in a single dramatic moment. It accumulates through normalization, fragmentation, and repetition. Emergency powers invoked once become routine. Administrative exceptions harden into precedent. Oversight weakened in one domain reappears weakened elsewhere. The only reliable way to see such processes clearly is to record events as they occur, without retrospective compression or selective hindsight.

This volume is therefore designed for use, not persuasion.

Researchers may examine it longitudinally to observe institutional change. Journalists may refer to it to place breaking news within a larger context. Legal scholars, historians, and civic groups might use it as a reference when assessing claims, defenses, or reforms. General readers may follow it week by week to understand how significant shifts arise from seemingly ordinary actions.

No conclusions are imposed here. The record speaks for itself.

If this book succeeds, it will do so quietly—by making it more difficult in the future to say that no one noticed, no one recorded, or no one could have known.

This volume is part of a two-book series.

*The Democracy Clock* is the analytical companion to this record. It interprets the same events through a structured framework designed to evaluate democratic resilience and decline over time. While this book preserves the weekly factual archive, the companion volume explores the meaning of these events when viewed cumulatively—how patterns form, accelerate, or reverse, and how democratic norms are reinforced or undermined across weeks and institutions.

Readers can use the two volumes independently or together. This book is meant to stand alone as a primary source record. The companion volume assumes the existence of this log and expands upon it. Together, they separate evidence from interpretation—ensuring analysis remains rooted in a clear, transparent historical record.

## **SOURCE BASIS AND VERIFICATION**

Events documented in this volume are based on contemporary public records and reports produced during the covered period. These include official government documents, court filings and rulings, agency releases, legislative records, executive actions, and verified accounts of institutional activity provided by established news organizations and watchdog groups. Individual events are identified by the date they entered or could be confirmed to have entered the public record. Dates indicate when an action was publicly documented, reported, or corroborated—not necessarily when the action itself took place. This reflects the log’s purpose: to keep a chronological record of observable governance actions affecting democratic institutions, rather than to reconstruct undocumented or inferred timelines of internal decision-making.

Events are included only if their occurrence could be verified at the time through primary documents, corroborated reports, or institutional records. As reporting evolved, entries were either conflicted or clarified over time; they reflect what was verifiable within the specified weekly interval. Multiple dates indicate independent confirmation or sustained documentation across sources, not repeated or ongoing actions. No event is included solely on speculation, inference, or unverified claims.

Sources are not listed with each entry. This is a deliberate design choice that reflects the log’s role as an archival record rather than an argumentative or narrative text. The absence of inline citations does not imply a lack of sourcing; it reflects a separation between evidence collection and analysis.

Readers seeking original documents, contemporaneous reports, or additional context should consult public records and reports corresponding to each entry's documented date or dates. Analytical interpretation of these recorded events is addressed separately in the companion volume, *The Democracy Clock*.

# **CHAPTER 1**

## **WEEK 27 (19 JUL 2025 – 25 JUL 2025): DATABASES AND DETENTION AS GOVERNANCE**

*A week when immigration camps, crypto reserves, and AI propaganda showed how law, money, and information are being refitted to serve power first.*

This week shows a significant rise in executive power, increased politicization of law enforcement, and a coordinated struggle over legitimacy and accountability. Structurally, the greatest pressures focus on civil service independence, regulatory integrity, immigration enforcement, and the information ecosystem. Mass layoffs and reorganizations at the State Department, EPA, USDA, DOJ, and ICE—along with Supreme Court stays and RIF approvals—deepen government control. Immigration policy becomes a central point of authoritarian shift: expanded detention centers, National Guard deployments, masked raids, Medicaid data-sharing, and courthouse arrests normalize rights-violating enforcement against non-citizens. Simultaneously, efforts are underway to weaponize the justice system against political opponents (Obama, Schiff) and to weaken police-reform consent decrees and birthright citizenship, though some courts push back. On the information front, the White House takes control of the press pool, bans the Wall Street Journal, leverages mergers, and floods discourse with AI-generated fake content and treason allegations, while selectively releasing MLK and Clinton files to divert attention from Epstein records. Some judicial and legislative actions oppose these trends, but overall, systemic entrenchment continues.

## Power and Authority

1. President Trump and the Environmental Protection Agency eliminated the EPA's research and development office and began mass layoffs. The administration cut thousands of EPA staff and dismantled its research arm, weakening federal capacity to generate independent science that informs environmental regulation and public health protections. (19 Jul 2025)

2. President Trump publicly pressured Federal Reserve Chair Jerome Powell to cut interest rates and suggested firing him. Trump's attacks on the Fed chair and hints at removal challenged the central bank's independence, risking politicization of monetary policy that is meant to be insulated from short-term political demands. (19 Jul 2025)

3. President Trump demanded release of grand jury testimony related to the Epstein investigation. By urging disclosure of sensitive grand jury material in a case touching on his own reputation, Trump blurred lines between personal interest and state power, pressuring legal processes for political damage control. (19 Jul 2025)

4. Director of National Intelligence Tulsi Gabbard referred former President Obama and officials to DOJ for treason investigations over 2016 intelligence. The DNI's treason referral against a former president and national security officials weaponized intelligence oversight to criminalize prior policy decisions, undermining norms that separate partisan conflict from prosecutorial power. (19 Jul 2025)

5. President Trump raised US tariffs to an average effective rate of 20.6 percent. The sharp tariff increase centralized trade power in the executive, using border taxes as a unilateral tool that can reshape prices and international relations without direct democratic input. (19 Jul 2025)

6. Secretary of State Marco Rubio revoked US visas of eight Brazilian Supreme Court judges. Stripping visas from foreign judges adjudicating Bolsonaro's alleged coup attempt used US diplomatic power to pressure another country's judiciary, signaling willingness to intervene on behalf of aligned political actors. (19 Jul 2025)

7. The Trump Administration implemented deep State Department budget cuts and reorganization targeting rights programs. Nearly halving the State Department budget and cutting LGBTQ+, reproductive health, and minority programs shifted US foreign policy away from rights promotion, concentrating discretion over diplomacy in ideological appointees. (21 Jul 2025)

8. The Trump Administration targeted sanctuary cities with intensified ICE operations. Prioritizing aggressive ICE deployments in sanctuary juris-

dictions used federal enforcement power to punish local governments for divergent immigration policies, straining federalism and heightening fear in immigrant communities. (22 Jul 2025)

9. President Trump signed an executive order creating a Strategic Bitcoin Reserve and federal crypto stockpile. By directing the federal government to accumulate bitcoin and digital assets, Trump intertwined national economic strategy with a volatile asset class in which his allies have stakes, raising conflict-of-interest and stability concerns. (22 Jul 2025)

10. President Trump issued an executive order effectively barring trans women from US Olympic and Paralympic women's teams. Extending a federal ban on trans athletes into Olympic selection policy used executive authority to restrict participation of a marginalized group in national representation, signaling state-endorsed exclusion. (22 Jul 2025)

11. President Trump ordered redrawing of Texas congressional districts ahead of the 2026 midterms. Trump's direction of Texas redistricting, amid DOJ racial-gerrymandering concerns, inserted presidential influence into state map-drawing to entrench partisan advantage and dilute minority representation. (25 Jul 2025)

12. President Trump signed an executive order to accelerate federal permitting of data center infrastructure. The order fast-tracked AI data center projects by easing environmental review and revoking prior safeguards, centralizing permitting discretion in the executive and prioritizing industry speed over local and environmental checks. (23 Jul 2025)

13. President Trump issued an executive order restricting use of so-called 'woke' AI in the federal government. Mandating that federal AI systems avoid DEI-related content allowed the executive to impose ideological tests on government technology, shaping information outputs to align with administration narratives. (23 Jul 2025)

14. President Trump created the American AI Exports Program to promote US AI technology abroad. The AI export order positioned the executive branch to steer global deployment of US AI stacks, blending industrial policy and national security in ways that can privilege favored firms and geopolitical aims. (23 Jul 2025)

15. President Trump signed executive orders to clear unhoused people from streets and expand civil commitment. New homelessness orders directed aggressive removal of unhoused people from public spaces and sought to overturn court limits on involuntary treatment, expanding coercive state power over a vulnerable population. (24 Jul 2025)

16. President Trump signed an executive order on 'Saving College Sports' restricting third-party pay for athletes. By directing federal agencies to curb

pay-for-play arrangements in college sports, the order inserted federal authority into collegiate governance and athlete compensation debates traditionally handled by states and associations. (24 Jul 2025)

17. Florida Governor Ron DeSantis and the Department of Homeland Security signed an agreement deputizing Florida highway patrol to enforce federal immigration law. The 287(g)-style agreement expanded state troopers' authority to arrest and detain immigrants on federal grounds, deepening the fusion of state policing with federal immigration enforcement and heightening risks of civil-rights abuses. (25 Jul 2025)

18. Department of Defense awarded a \$1.26 billion contract to build a 5,000-bed detention facility at Fort Bliss. Funding a massive tent detention complex on a military base expanded the federal infrastructure for large-scale confinement of migrants, normalizing quasi-military facilities for civil immigration enforcement. (25 Jul 2025)

19. President Trump stated he had authority to pardon Ghislaine Maxwell and had not ruled it out. By publicly musing about a potential pardon for Maxwell while DOJ engages her as a witness, Trump highlighted how clemency powers could be used to shield or incentivize cooperation by high-profile offenders tied to elites. (25 Jul 2025)

## Institutions and Governance

1. Senator Ron Wyden renewed demands for financial records related to Jeffrey Epstein. Wyden's push for bank reports on Epstein's flagged transactions sought to expose how financial institutions handled suspected trafficking funds, reinforcing legislative oversight of elite financial crime. (19 Jul 2025)

2. Senator Dick Durbin questioned DOJ and FBI over mass reassignment of agents to review Epstein files mentioning Trump. Durbin's inquiry challenged whether investigative resources were being redirected to protect or target specific political figures, testing transparency and impartiality in high-profile case management. (19 Jul 2025)

3. Senator Lisa Murkowski criticized Trump's orders undermining renewable energy projects she had protected in legislation. Murkowski's complaint underscored how executive orders can override negotiated statutory compromises, weakening Congress's ability to set durable policy on energy and climate. (19 Jul 2025)

4. Speaker Mike Johnson refused to schedule a vote on a bipartisan resolution to release Epstein files. By blocking a floor vote likely to pass, Johnson

used agenda control to prevent disclosure in a politically sensitive case, limiting Congress's transparency role. (20 Jul 2025)

5. Speaker Mike Johnson sent the House into early recess to avoid a vote on releasing Epstein files. Closing the House early to dodge a bipartisan transparency vote turned procedural control into a shield against accountability on elite-linked sexual abuse investigations. (21 Jul 2025; 22 Jul 2025; 23 Jul 2025)

6. House Ethics complainant Article3 Project filed an ethics complaint against Minority Leader Hakeem Jeffries over comments on a US attorney retention vote. The complaint alleged improper pressure on district judges over Alina Habba's retention, highlighting tensions between political speech and judicial independence in appointment processes. (20 Jul 2025)

7. Supreme Court of the United States lifted injunctions blocking State Department mass firings. The Court's decision allowed RIF notices to proceed for over 1,300 State employees, signaling judicial deference to executive workforce purges that can politicize foreign-service staffing. (21 Jul 2025)

8. US District Court for the Southern District of Mississippi temporarily blocked enforcement of Mississippi's anti-DEI education law. The TRO against a statewide DEI ban in schools and universities preserved existing diversity programs while courts assess First and Fourteenth Amendment claims, checking legislative overreach into academic governance. (21 Jul 2025)

9. US Court of Appeals allowed termination of TPS for Afghans and Cameroonians to proceed. By reversing a lower-court block on ending TPS for tens of thousands, the appeals court enabled abrupt status loss for vulnerable immigrants, narrowing judicial protection against harsh executive immigration shifts. (21 Jul 2025)

10. Coalition of 21 Democratic attorneys general sued to block restrictions on undocumented immigrants' access to federal health and safety-net programs. The multistate lawsuit challenged federal efforts to cut immigrants off from basic services, using state litigation to defend social protections and contest executive policy. (21 Jul 2025)

11. Department of Homeland Security restored TPS and work authorization for Haitians following a court order. DHS's compliance with a judicial block on TPS termination for Haitians showed courts still constraining abrupt status revocations that would destabilize immigrant communities. (21 Jul 2025)

12. Federal judges in Maryland secured dismissal of a Trump administration lawsuit against state judges over deportation orders. The dismissal defended state judicial authority against federal attempts to punish judges

for blocking deportations, reinforcing separation of powers and judicial independence. (21 Jul 2025)

13. US District Court ordered restoration of immigration judges' ability to appoint counsel for mentally disabled immigrants. Reinstating judges' authority to assign counsel to vulnerable immigrants strengthened due-process safeguards in complex proceedings where unrepresented individuals face removal. (21 Jul 2025)

14. Supreme Court of the United States granted a stay in Trump v. Boyle allowing termination of Consumer Product Safety Commission members. The stay let the administration keep three CPSC commissioners removed, signaling high-court support for expanded presidential control over independent regulatory bodies. (23 Jul 2025)

15. US Courts of Appeals and District Courts repeatedly blocked Trump's executive order ending birthright citizenship. Appellate and district rulings declaring the birthright-citizenship order unconstitutional upheld Fourteenth Amendment guarantees and limited executive attempts to redefine citizenship unilaterally. (23 Jul 2025; 24 Jul 2025; 25 Jul 2025)

16. Federal courts in Tennessee and Maryland ordered release and barred immediate deportation of Kilmar Ábrego García. Judges in two states intervened to free Ábrego from custody and prevent sudden deportation, asserting judicial oversight over executive detention and removal practices. (23 Jul 2025; 25 Jul 2025)

17. US District Judge Robin Rosenberg denied DOJ requests to unseal Epstein grand jury transcripts. Rosenberg's rulings kept grand jury materials sealed despite DOJ motions, emphasizing legal limits on transparency in sensitive cases even amid intense political pressure. (23 Jul 2025; 25 Jul 2025)

18. Federal judge dismissed a Trump administration lawsuit challenging Illinois and Chicago sanctuary policies. The dismissal upheld state and local discretion over cooperation with federal immigration enforcement, reinforcing federalism against attempts to coerce sanctuary jurisdictions. (23 Jul 2025)

19. The Trump Administration filed a lawsuit against New York City over its sanctuary city policies. Suing NYC for its sanctuary stance sought to use federal courts to override local limits on cooperation with immigration enforcement, escalating conflict over jurisdictional authority. (24 Jul 2025)

20. House Oversight Committee voted to subpoena Ghislaine Maxwell and the Justice Department for Epstein files. Bipartisan committee votes to compel Maxwell's testimony and DOJ records aimed to pierce executive secrecy around Epstein, reasserting congressional investigative powers over a politically fraught case. (23 Jul 2025; 24 Jul 2025; 25 Jul 2025)

21. Senate Republicans on the Judiciary Committee blocked the Epstein Transparency Act. Committee Republicans prevented advancement of a bill to increase disclosure in the Epstein case, limiting statutory routes for public access to information about elite-linked crimes. (23 Jul 2025)
22. Senators Lindsey Graham and John Cornyn urged appointment of a special counsel to investigate Obama-era intelligence on Russia. Calls for a special counsel into prior intelligence assessments risked reframing settled bipartisan findings as partisan misconduct, pressuring DOJ to reopen politically charged inquiries. (24 Jul 2025)
23. Congress and President Trump enacted the Rescissions Act of 2025 canceling budgetary resources. The rescissions law clawed back previously appropriated funds, shifting fiscal priorities and demonstrating how executive-legislative alignment can rapidly reallocate resources away from earlier commitments. (24 Jul 2025)
24. Congress and President Trump enacted the Filing Relief for Natural Disasters Act. The new law provided tax-filing relief in disaster areas, showing Congress still using its authority to ease administrative burdens and support affected communities. (24 Jul 2025)
25. Congress and President Trump created the Jocelyn Nungaray National Wildlife Refuge. Establishing a new wildlife refuge demonstrated ongoing legislative capacity to protect public lands and biodiversity through statute despite broader deregulatory trends. (24 Jul 2025)
26. Federal Election Commission canceled a scheduled open meeting for September 4, 2025. Canceling a public FEC meeting reduced opportunities for transparent discussion of campaign-finance and election-oversight issues, limiting public visibility into regulatory decisions. (24 Jul 2025)
27. National Archives and Records Administration invited public comment on proposed federal records schedules. NARA's request for input on record disposition plans opened a channel for public oversight of which government documents are preserved or destroyed, supporting archival transparency. (24 Jul 2025)
28. Federal judge ordered restoration of a public spending tracker website. Requiring the administration to reinstate an online tracker for apportionment decisions enforced statutory transparency obligations around federal spending. (21 Jul 2025)
29. Department of Justice released additional documents from the Hillary Clinton email investigation. Publishing more records from a long-closed probe into Clinton's emails kept a politically charged case in public view, raising questions about selective transparency and political use of past investigations. (23 Jul 2025)

30. The Trump Administration released over 230,000 FBI records on Martin Luther King Jr. The mass release of historic FBI surveillance files on MLK, over family objections, expanded access to state records while also appearing timed to divert attention from Epstein-file secrecy. (21 Jul 2025; 23 Jul 2025)

31. Department of Justice announced it would not release additional Epstein files despite holding about 100,000 pages. DOJ's refusal to disclose more Epstein records, citing sensitivity, deepened concerns that information about elite-linked crimes is being withheld from public scrutiny. (24 Jul 2025)

32. Federal judge ordered the Trump administration to restore a public spending tracker website. The order enforced statutory transparency requirements for apportionment data, countering executive efforts to obscure how funds are allocated. (21 Jul 2025)

## Civil Rights and Dissent

1. Family of Cornelius Taylor sued the city of Atlanta after he was killed during a homeless encampment sweep. The lawsuit over a fatal bulldozer sweep challenged aggressive encampment clearances that can endanger unhoused people while prioritizing urban image and development goals. (19 Jul 2025)

2. Department of Justice requested a one-day sentence for former officer Brett Hankison in the Breonna Taylor case. DOJ's call for minimal punishment in a civil-rights conviction over a deadly raid signaled leniency toward police misconduct, undermining confidence in federal civil-rights enforcement. (19 Jul 2025)

3. Federal courts sentenced Brett Hankison to nearly three years in prison for violating Breonna Taylor's rights. The 33-month sentence, harsher than DOJ's recommendation, demonstrated judicial willingness to impose meaningful accountability for rights-violating police raids. (21 Jul 2025; 22 Jul 2025)

4. Immigration and Customs Enforcement expanded detention capacity with tent facilities and targeted sanctuary cities. ICE's rapid build-out of tent detention and focus on sanctuary jurisdictions intensified mass confinement of migrants, often in precarious conditions with limited legal recourse. (19 Jul 2025; 21 Jul 2025; 22 Jul 2025; 25 Jul 2025)

5. Coalition of 21 state attorneys general urged Congress to ban masked federal immigration agents. State AGs pressed for legislation requiring ICE agents to show their identities, arguing that masked raids erode accountability and enable abuses against immigrants. (20 Jul 2025)

6. Immigration and Customs Enforcement allowed agents to continue

wearing masks during arrest raids. ICE's insistence on masked operations, despite impersonation and fear concerns, entrenched opaque enforcement practices that make it harder for targets to assert their rights. (20 Jul 2025)

7. Immigration and Customs Enforcement and CMS gained access to Medicaid records to locate undocumented immigrants. Sharing sensitive health-program data with ICE for enforcement purposes risked deterring families from seeking care and expanded surveillance of immigrant communities. (20 Jul 2025; 21 Jul 2025)

8. Human Rights Watch and partner groups documented abusive conditions in Florida ICE detention centers. Reports of shackling, overcrowding, and inadequate medical care in ICE facilities highlighted systemic rights violations against detainees held under expanded enforcement policies. (21 Jul 2025; 25 Jul 2025)

9. The Trump Administration terminated police-reform consent decrees in more than 20 cities. Ending federal oversight agreements with police departments rolled back mechanisms designed to curb systemic misconduct, weakening protections for communities facing abusive policing. (25 Jul 2025)

10. Immigration and Customs Enforcement detained journalist Mario Guevara and pursued his deportation after protest coverage. ICE's continued detention of a protest-covering journalist, despite dropped charges, suggested retaliatory use of immigration powers against both a reporter and immigrant communities. (20 Jul 2025; 22 Jul 2025)

11. Immigration and Customs Enforcement detained an asylum seeker in a San Antonio courtroom immediately after her hearing. Arresting an asylum seeker at court despite a future hearing date exemplified tactics that undermine due process and discourage immigrants from engaging with the legal system. (22 Jul 2025)

12. Immigration and Customs Enforcement increased use of ankle monitors and supervision in Alternatives to Detention. Expanding electronic monitoring tightened control over migrants outside physical detention, extending surveillance and constraints on daily life without full judicial oversight. (24 Jul 2025)

13. Immigration and Customs Enforcement arrested nearly 3,000 people in Los Angeles, including some citizens and lawful residents. Large-scale ICE sweeps in Los Angeles, with mistaken arrests and no criminal history for many, spread fear in immigrant neighborhoods and raised due-process concerns. (25 Jul 2025)

14. Florida Governor Ron DeSantis announced deportations and transfers from the 'Alligator Alcatraz' detention camp. Deporting detainees from a widely criticized camp with harsh conditions highlighted how state-run facil-

ties can facilitate rapid removals with limited transparency or oversight. (25 Jul 2025)

15. Department of Homeland Security and ICE directed CBP to ask detained teenagers if they wished to self-deport. Prompting minors in custody to 'choose' self-deportation exploited their vulnerability and limited understanding, undermining meaningful consent in life-altering decisions. (23 Jul 2025)

16. The Trump Administration ended investigations and consent decrees on police misconduct in multiple cities. Terminating federal oversight of troubled police departments weakened a key tool for enforcing civil-rights standards and curbing abusive practices. (25 Jul 2025)

17. Columbia University disciplined about 80 students for a pro-Palestinian library protest. Mass suspensions, expulsions, and degree revocations for protest participants, under a broadened antisemitism definition, signaled a campus crackdown on certain political speech. (24 Jul 2025)

18. ICE agents at Durham courthouse and local community organizers sparked a rapid protest against courthouse immigration enforcement. Community mobilization in response to ICE presence at a courthouse illustrated local resistance to enforcement tactics seen as chilling access to justice for immigrants. (23 Jul 2025)

19. Climate activists and local police clashed during protests at Wells Fargo offices, leading to seven arrests. Arrests at coordinated climate protests against fossil-fuel financing showed how civil disobedience campaigns challenging corporate and federal climate policies face policing and legal risk. (23 Jul 2025)

20. US government and Venezuelan youth baseball team denied visas to a Little League team from Venezuela. Refusing visas for child athletes curtailed a benign cultural exchange, reflecting how restrictive immigration policies can spill over into apolitical civic and sporting ties. (24 Jul 2025)

21. The Trump Administration banned trans women from US women's Olympic and Paralympic teams. The exclusion of trans women from national teams codified discrimination in elite sport, reinforcing broader efforts to restrict transgender participation in public life. (22 Jul 2025)

22. The Trump Administration and ICE expanded courthouse and hallway arrests at New York immigration courts. Detaining people immediately after hearings, even when granted follow-up dates, turned courts into arrest zones, discouraging attendance and undermining trust in legal processes. (25 Jul 2025)

23. The Trump Administration and DHS held over 56,000 people in detention centers amid reports of inhumane conditions. Record-high deten-

tion numbers, many without criminal histories, combined with reports of overcrowding and neglect, underscored a punitive approach to migration over humane alternatives. (25 Jul 2025)

## Economic Structure

1. President Trump and Congress enacted a tax bill projected to add \$3.4 trillion to the debt and cut Medicaid and SNAP. The law made corporate and high-income tax cuts permanent while slashing safety-net programs, shifting fiscal benefits toward capital and leaving millions with reduced health coverage and food assistance. (21 Jul 2025; 25 Jul 2025)

2. The Trump Administration tripled ICE's budget and planned expanded enforcement in sanctuary cities. Massive ICE funding increases and targeted operations in sanctuary jurisdictions redirected public money toward aggressive immigration control, expanding a carceral infrastructure with limited accountability. (21 Jul 2025)

3. Neuralink falsely self-certified as a small disadvantaged business to obtain federal contracting advantages. Neuralink's long-running misclassification as an SDB exploited programs meant for marginalized entrepreneurs, illustrating how well-capitalized firms can game procurement rules. (19 Jul 2025)

4. The Trump Administration raised tariffs and pushed for broad new tariffs in EU negotiations. Higher tariffs, including proposed double-digit levies on EU goods, increased consumer prices and trade tensions, using trade policy as a blunt economic and geopolitical instrument. (19 Jul 2025; 20 Jul 2025; 24 Jul 2025)

5. General Motors reported a 35 percent drop in net income due to Trump's automotive tariffs. GM's earnings hit underscored how tariff policy can destabilize major employers and supply chains, with downstream effects on workers and regional economies. (21 Jul 2025)

6. President Trump and Congress enacted the GENIUS Act establishing a crypto-friendly regulatory framework for stablecoins. The crypto law, heavily shaped by industry lobbyists and overlapping with Trump-linked ventures, legitimized stablecoins while raising concerns that financial regulation is being written for insiders. (22 Jul 2025)

7. Trump Media & Technology Group acquired \$2 billion in bitcoin, pivoting into a crypto holding company. TMTG's massive bitcoin purchase, amid pro-crypto federal policy, highlighted how political influence and corporate strategy can reinforce each other in speculative markets. (22 Jul 2025)

8. Senate and President Trump installed Paul Atkins as SEC chair and dropped major crypto enforcement cases. Atkins's confirmation and swift dismissal of lawsuits against large crypto firms signaled a regulatory turn favoring an industry with close ties to administration allies. (22 Jul 2025)

9. White House issued ethics waivers allowing advisor David Sacks to keep crypto investments while shaping policy. Letting a senior digital-assets advisor retain undisclosed crypto stakes while influencing regulation created direct conflicts of interest, eroding trust in impartial economic policymaking. (22 Jul 2025)

10. The Trump Administration froze and then agreed to unfreeze billions in federal education funding after lawsuits. The temporary freeze of over \$5–6 billion in education funds, reversed under pressure, showed how executive budget maneuvers can be used to exert leverage over schools and states. (21 Jul 2025; 25 Jul 2025)

11. Coalition of nonprofits and local governments sued over federal funding rules threatening services for domestic violence and homelessness. Challenges to new HUD and HHS conditions highlighted how funding levers can be used to reshape social-service provision and potentially punish organizations serving vulnerable groups. (21 Jul 2025)

12. The Trump Administration froze \$6 billion in federal education program funding, prompting litigation. The freeze on congressionally allocated education funds, later challenged in court, illustrated executive willingness to override legislative spending decisions affecting schools nationwide. (21 Jul 2025)

13. The Trump Administration cut \$20 million in EPA clean-water grants for pesticide-contaminated rural California. Rescinding funds for safe drinking water in farmworker communities, labeled a 'wasteful DEI program,' shifted environmental burdens onto poor, largely minority residents. (24 Jul 2025)

14. US Department of Agriculture announced salary cuts, office closures, and relocation of thousands of staff. USDA's restructuring reduced Washington-based capacity and uprooted staff, weakening federal support for farmers and food safety while aligning with broader efforts to shrink the civil service. (24 Jul 2025)

15. The Trump Administration signed a \$9 billion rescissions package cutting foreign aid and public broadcasting funds. Canceling \$8 billion in foreign aid and \$1.1 billion for public broadcasting reoriented federal spending away from diplomacy and independent media toward other priorities. (24 Jul 2025)

16. Columbia University and the Trump administration reached a \$200

million settlement restoring over \$400 million in federal grants. The settlement tied restoration of research funding to speech-related conditions and governance changes, demonstrating how federal dollars can be used to reshape university policies and campus expression. (23 Jul 2025; 24 Jul 2025)

17. The Trump Administration awarded a \$1.26 billion contract for a massive immigrant detention facility at Fort Bliss. The Fort Bliss contract expanded a lucrative detention industry, channeling public funds into long-term confinement infrastructure for migrants. (22 Jul 2025; 25 Jul 2025)

18. The Trump Administration approved the Paramount–Skydance merger after anti-DEI assurances. FCC approval of the media merger, conditioned on rolling back DEI and addressing alleged news bias, showed how regulatory power can shape corporate governance and newsroom culture. (24 Jul 2025; 25 Jul 2025)

19. The Trump Administration unfroze over \$5 billion in previously withheld federal education funding. Releasing funds after legal and public pressure underscored both the vulnerability of school budgets to executive decisions and the capacity of external checks to reverse them. (25 Jul 2025)

20. The Trump Administration used taxpayer funds for Trump's Scotland trip tied to his golf business. Criticism over public spending on a trip that promoted Trump's private golf course highlighted ongoing concerns about emoluments and blending of official travel with personal business. (24 Jul 2025)

## Information, Memory, and Manipulation

1. Donald Trump filed multibillion-dollar defamation lawsuits against the Wall Street Journal and Rupert Murdoch. Trump's \$10 billion libel suits over reporting on an alleged Epstein letter sought to punish a major outlet for unfavorable coverage, potentially chilling investigative reporting. (19 Jul 2025; 20 Jul 2025; 21 Jul 2025; 22 Jul 2025)

2. Federal judge Paul Gardephe dismissed Trump's \$50 million lawsuit against journalist Bob Woodward. The dismissal of Trump's suit over use of interview tapes reaffirmed legal protections for journalists publishing material obtained with consent, pushing back against retaliatory litigation. (19 Jul 2025)

3. Director of National Intelligence Tulsi Gabbard publicly accused Barack Obama of a 'treasonous conspiracy' against Trump. Gabbard's televised treason claims, contradicting prior bipartisan findings on Russian interference, injected disinformation into official discourse and framed political opponents as criminals. (19 Jul 2025; 22 Jul 2025)

4. The Trump Administration altered State Department human rights reports to remove sections on reproductive, LGBTQ+, and minority rights. Editing out key rights topics from official reports reshaped the public record of global abuses, aligning US documentation with the administration's ideological agenda. (21 Jul 2025)

5. President Trump posted an AI-generated video depicting Barack Obama being arrested. Sharing a fabricated arrest video of a former president used deepfake technology to blur reality and inflame partisan narratives about supposed past crimes. (21 Jul 2025)

6. Wall Street Journal published an alleged 2003 Trump birthday letter to Jeffrey Epstein. The story, and Trump's denial and lawsuit, intensified disputes over document authenticity and media credibility in reporting on elite networks around Epstein. (21 Jul 2025)

7. White House removed the Wall Street Journal from the presidential press pool and took control of pool assignments. By seizing press-pool control from reporters and excluding the WSJ after critical coverage, the administration used access as leverage to reward friendly outlets and punish critics. (20 Jul 2025; 21 Jul 2025; 22 Jul 2025)

8. Unknown pro-Trump operators ran an AI-driven bot network of hundreds of accounts promoting administration figures. The discovery of a large AI bot network amplifying pro-Trump messaging on X highlighted coordinated computational propaganda efforts in the online information sphere. (20 Jul 2025)

9. Department of Homeland Security tweeted neo-Nazi-echoing rhetoric praising genocide against Indigenous people. A DHS tweet featuring imagery and language glorifying Indigenous genocide signaled extremist narratives seeping into official communications, distorting public memory of historical atrocities. (23 Jul 2025)

10. Kari Lake at US Agency for Global Media locked the acting CEO out of systems and threatened the Voice of America director. Power moves inside USAGM to sideline leadership and pressure VOA management raised alarms about political interference in US-funded international broadcasting. (23 Jul 2025)

11. White House Press Secretary Karoline Leavitt called for revoking Pulitzers from the New York Times and Washington Post over Russia reporting. Demanding that major outlets lose awards for coverage of Russian interference sought to delegitimize prior investigative work and rewrite the narrative of 2016 election meddling. (23 Jul 2025)

12. President Trump and congressional allies repeatedly claimed without evidence that Obama cheated in the 2016 election. Coordinated messaging

that Obama 'rigged' 2016, despite contrary evidence, aimed to recast past elections as illegitimate and normalize treating opponents as criminal conspirators. (22 Jul 2025; 23 Jul 2025; 24 Jul 2025)

13. The Trump Administration released 230,000 MLK assassination documents while withholding Epstein files. The selective release of historic civil-rights surveillance records, contrasted with secrecy around Epstein, suggested archives are being curated to distract from current elite accountability issues. (21 Jul 2025; 23 Jul 2025)

14. The Trump Administration withheld about 100,000 pages of Epstein files from public release. Maintaining secrecy over a vast trove of Epstein documents, even as related scandals swirl, reinforced perceptions that information about elite wrongdoing is being shielded. (24 Jul 2025)

15. Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth was reported to have shared content from a 'SECRET' email in a Signal chat. Allegations that Hegseth relayed classified information via an encrypted chat raised concerns about selective and informal handling of secrets at the top of the security establishment. (25 Jul 2025)

16. The Trump Administration used AI and policy to shape government information outputs and narratives. Executive orders on 'woke' AI and AI export, combined with bot networks and deepfakes, embedded algorithmic tools into a broader strategy to steer public understanding and suppress disfavored perspectives. (20 Jul 2025; 21 Jul 2025; 22 Jul 2025; 23 Jul 2025; 24 Jul 2025)



## CHAPTER 2

### **WEEK 28 (26 JUL 2025 – 1 AUG 2025): CONFINEMENT AS GOVERNANCE**

*With no single shock, the administration deepened a regime where law, welfare, and information serve personalized power and stratified citizenship.*

This week highlights a sharp consolidation of executive and partisan power across various areas, with courts, agencies, immigration enforcement, and trade policy increasingly intertwined with a personalized, Trump-focused agenda. The most significant pressure targets judicial independence—such as Emil Bove's confirmation despite whistleblower warnings, DOJ actions against Judge Boasberg, and politicized appointments of US attorneys—and the rule of law in immigration and detention, including Alien Enemies Act deportations, Alligator Alcatraz, and Cecot flights ignoring court orders. There is also an ongoing stratification of citizenship based on ancestry, race, and status, exemplified by Vance's redefinition of citizenship, efforts to push DACA self-deportation, cuts to SNAP and Medicaid, and the harsh detention of disabled migrants. Meanwhile, the administration leverages economic tools—tariffs, emergency powers, AI-driven deregulation, and social program cuts—to reward allies, punish opponents domestically and internationally, and obscure accountability. Universities and media face pressure through funding threats, politicized investigations, and licensing leverage. State actions in Texas and North Carolina deepen gerrymandering and voter suppression. Though some resistance exists—federal courts blocking birthright and Planned Parenthood funding cuts, multistate lawsuits, investigative journalism exposing abuses—the overall trend shows a significant increase in authoritarian tactics within officially legal and electoral systems.

## Power and Authority

1. President Trump and the Department of Government Efficiency used an AI tool to generate a large-scale deregulation "delete list". The administration's DOGE AI Deregulation Decision Tool aimed to eliminate up to half of federal rules with minimal public oversight, shifting vast regulatory power into opaque executive-controlled algorithms. (26 Jul 2025)

2. Secretary of Health and Human Services Robert F. Kennedy Jr. moved to remove all members of a key preventive health task force. Replacing an entire federal preventive health advisory panel with ideologically aligned appointees concentrated control of health guidance in political hands, weakening expert-based checks on executive health policy. (26 Jul 2025)

3. President Trump signed a rescissions package cutting previously appropriated funds. Using rescissions to claw back congressionally approved spending, including for education, expanded executive leverage over the power of the purse and tested statutory limits on impoundment. (26 Jul 2025)

4. Federal Emergency Management Agency launched a detention support grant program for temporary migrant facilities. FEMA's new \$608 million grant program to build temporary migrant detention centers expanded federal capacity to confine noncitizens, deepening executive control over vulnerable populations. (26 Jul 2025)

5. President Trump publicly demanded prosecution of prominent Black public figures without evidence. Calling for criminal charges against Kamala Harris, Beyoncé, Oprah Winfrey, and Al Sharpton absent evidence signaled willingness to wield prosecutorial power rhetorically against political and cultural opponents. (26 Jul 2025)

6. President Trump enacted massive Medicaid cuts through the One Big Beautiful Bill Act. Cutting over \$1 trillion from Medicaid and offering only limited rural offsets shifted health burdens onto low-income Americans and states, using federal spending power to reshape social rights. (27 Jul 2025)

7. White House budget chief Russell Vought announced exploration of pocket rescissions to withhold congressionally allocated funds. Considering pocket rescissions to let appropriated funds expire would let the executive nullify spending laws without repeal, eroding Congress's control over federal resources. (27 Jul 2025)

8. CIA Director John Ratcliffe refused to rule out treason indictments against former senior officials. Floating possible treason charges against Brennan, Comey, and Hillary Clinton over alleged conspiracies against Trump blurred intelligence work with partisan retribution and threatened to criminalize prior oversight. (27 Jul 2025)

9. President Trump accepted a luxury jumbo jet from Qatar to serve as Air Force One. Accepting a \$400 million aircraft from Qatar as Air Force One, later funded through opaque budget transfers, raised serious emoluments and foreign influence concerns around core state assets. (28 Jul 2025; 29 Jul 2025)

10. President Trump issued an executive order enabling mass detention of homeless people. The "Ending Crime and Disorder on America's Streets" order empowered sweeping arrests and camp-style detention of homeless individuals, expanding coercive executive authority over a marginalized group. (28 Jul 2025)

11. The Trump Administration authorized federal employees to proselytize and pray publicly at work. New guidance allowing federal workers to promote their faith on the job blurred church-state boundaries and risked embedding favored religious expression within government operations. (28 Jul 2025; 31 Jul 2025)

12. The Trump Administration froze over \$100 million in federal research funding to Duke University over affirmative action. Halting NIH research funds to Duke unless it abandoned race-conscious practices used federal purse strings to coerce university policy on diversity and hiring. (30 Jul 2025)

13. President Trump ordered construction of a 90,000-square-foot White House ballroom. Authorizing a \$200 million, donor-funded ballroom to replace the East Wing redirected substantial resources and symbolic space toward leader-centered spectacle at the seat of government. (30 Jul 2025; 1 Aug 2025)

14. President Trump issued an executive order imposing a 40% tariff on Brazilian imports and declaring a national emergency. Using emergency powers to levy steep tariffs on Brazil in response to its internal politics and treatment of Bolsonaro showed economic coercion deployed through unilateral executive action. (30 Jul 2025)

15. President Trump suspended duty-free de minimis treatment for all countries. Eliminating duty-free treatment for low-value imports via executive order centralized control over a large slice of trade policy in the presidency under a national security rationale. (30 Jul 2025)

16. President Trump raised tariffs on Canadian goods to 35% through executive order. Increasing tariffs on Canadian imports and citing drugs and Palestine policy as justifications used emergency trade powers to punish a close ally over political disagreements. (31 Jul 2025; 1 Aug 2025)

17. President Trump further modified reciprocal tariff rates on multiple trading partners. An order adjusting reciprocal tariff rates across countries

entrenched the president's use of emergency economic authorities to unilaterally reshape trade relationships. (31 Jul 2025)

18. Office of Personnel Management allowed federal employees to publicly pray and evangelize at work. OPM's memo institutionalizing public prayer and persuasion in federal workplaces risked privileging certain faiths and pressuring subordinates, altering norms of religious neutrality in government. (31 Jul 2025)

19. President Trump announced new global tariff base rates just before a self-imposed deadline. Setting broad 10–15% tariff baselines by executive fiat, amid ongoing court challenges to his trade authority, underscored the presidency's expanded unilateral role in economic governance. (1 Aug 2025)

20. Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent described new "Trump accounts" as a backdoor to privatize Social Security. Framing new retirement accounts as a path to privatize Social Security signaled executive intent to shift core social insurance from public guarantees toward market-based instruments. (31 Jul 2025)

21. President Trump announced sweeping new tariffs on dozens of countries. Rolling out tariffs from 10% to 41% on a wide range of countries in one move used trade shocks as a blunt geopolitical tool, increasing executive leverage over foreign and domestic actors. (31 Jul 2025)

## Institutions and Governance

1. Federal courts maintained a nationwide block on Trump's birthright citizenship ban. By keeping Trump's order curtailing birthright citizenship on hold, the judiciary upheld constitutional protections against unilateral redefinition of citizenship by the executive. (26 Jul 2025; 29 Jul 2025)

2. House Speaker Mike Johnson adjourned the House to avoid a vote on releasing Jeffrey Epstein files. Shutting down the chamber to block a transparency vote on Epstein records used procedural control to limit disclosure in a high-profile accountability case. (27 Jul 2025)

3. House Oversight Committee Democrats moved to subpoena Steve Bannon for Epstein interview tapes. Seeking Bannon's unreleased Epstein interviews asserted congressional oversight over networks of elite misconduct and potential cover-ups. (27 Jul 2025)

4. Senator Dick Durbin demanded DOJ records and assurances regarding Ghislaine Maxwell meetings. Durbin's push for full DOJ transcripts and a no-pardon pledge in the Maxwell matter sought to reinforce transparency and limit preferential treatment in a politically sensitive case. (28 Jul 2025; 29 Jul 2025)

5. Freedom of the Press Foundation sued the Department of Justice for a memo approving Qatar's jet gift to Trump. Litigation to obtain DOJ's emoluments memo on Trump's Qatar jet challenged secrecy around legal justifications for accepting large foreign gifts. (28 Jul 2025)

6. Judge Indira Talwani ordered continuation of Medicaid reimbursements to Planned Parenthood. Blocking a tax-bill provision that cut Medicaid payments to abortion providers preserved access to reproductive health services and checked legislative overreach. (28 Jul 2025)

7. U.S. Court of Appeals for the Federal Circuit heard challenges to Trump's use of emergency powers to impose tariffs. Arguments in VOS Selections v. Trump tested whether the president exceeded statutory authority under IEEPA, probing judicial limits on unilateral trade actions. (28 Jul 2025; 30 Jul 2025; 31 Jul 2025)

8. Department of Justice filed a misconduct complaint against Judge James Boasberg over public comments. Targeting a federal judge for remarks about the administration risked chilling judicial speech and signaled executive willingness to discipline perceived critics on the bench. (28 Jul 2025)

9. Federal courts in New Jersey suspended criminal proceedings due to questions over acting U.S. attorney Alina Habba's authority. Halting cases while reviewing Habba's appointment highlighted concerns that politicized prosecutorial selections could undermine the legitimacy of federal prosecutions. (27 Jul 2025; 28 Jul 2025)

10. Coalition of 21 states and Washington, DC sued USDA to block a directive demanding extensive SNAP applicant data. States challenged federal demands for sensitive SNAP data, defending privacy and resisting expansion of centralized surveillance over low-income residents. (28 Jul 2025)

11. House Oversight Committee subpoenaed Ghislaine Maxwell to testify and later rejected her immunity demands. Compelling Maxwell's deposition while refusing clemency conditions asserted congressional prerogatives in investigating elite sex-trafficking networks without trading away accountability. (29 Jul 2025)

12. Senate Minority Leader Chuck Schumer and Democratic senators demanded DOJ turn over Epstein files and requested a counterintelligence assessment. Invoking statutory powers to obtain Epstein records and seeking a threat assessment on their misuse pressed the executive for transparency in a politically fraught case. (29 Jul 2025)

13. Senate Judiciary Committee Democrats called for a Hatch Act investigation into Trump appointees' redistricting work. Seeking scrutiny of senior officials' involvement in partisan mid-decade redistricting aimed to enforce civil service neutrality in election-related policymaking. (29 Jul 2025)

14. President Trump attacked the Senate Judiciary "blue slip" tradition and urged its removal. Pressuring the Senate to abandon home-state vetoes over judicial nominees sought to weaken a long-standing check on centralized control of the federal bench. (29 Jul 2025)

15. Texas Attorney General Ken Paxton sued a New York county clerk for refusing to enforce a Texas abortion fine. Texas's lawsuit against a New York official over an out-of-state abortion provider tested the reach of one state's laws into another's jurisdiction and shield protections. (29 Jul 2025)

16. Coalition of Democratic attorneys general and governors sued to block Trump administration efforts to terminate Planned Parenthood funding. States turned to the courts to defend reproductive health funding and free speech rights against federal attempts to defund specific providers. (29 Jul 2025)

17. Department of Justice asked courts to unseal Epstein and Maxwell grand jury transcripts and disclosed limited testimony. Seeking publication of grand jury testimony while revealing only two law enforcement witnesses had appeared raised questions about both transparency and the thoroughness of prior proceedings. (29 Jul 2025; 30 Jul 2025)

18. U.S. Senate confirmed former Trump lawyer Emil Bove to a lifetime federal appeals court seat. Confirming Bove despite whistleblower claims he urged ignoring court orders and misled Congress deepened concerns about partisan capture and lowered standards for judicial independence. (29 Jul 2025; 30 Jul 2025; 31 Jul 2025)

19. Democratic members of Congress sued ICE over new restrictions on detention facility visits. Lawmakers challenged ICE's requirement for advance notice of visits, arguing it unlawfully impeded congressional oversight of immigration detention conditions. (30 Jul 2025)

20. Senator Ron Wyden requested a DHS inspector general investigation into agent reassessments. Wyden's call for IG review of shifting agents from child exploitation to immigration enforcement sought to reassert watchdog scrutiny over politicized resource allocation. (30 Jul 2025)

21. Federal judiciary and judicial leadership reported escalating threats and intimidation against judges handling Trump-related cases. Rising harassment of judges, including pranks invoking a murdered judge's son and impeachment threats, highlighted mounting pressure on courts that could chill independent decision-making. (1 Aug 2025)

22. Federal courts and 16 Democratic-led states received a multistate lawsuit challenging an executive order targeting transgender youth healthcare. States sued to block an order threatening to strip funds from hospitals

providing gender-affirming care, using litigation to defend state health policy autonomy and minority rights. (1 Aug 2025)

23. Federal courts heard a challenge to Trump's reciprocal tariff regime under emergency powers. Reviewing whether IEEPA justified broad reciprocal tariffs put judicial scrutiny on the scope of delegated emergency economic authority. (31 Jul 2025)

## Civil Rights and Dissent

1. Florida Highway Patrol and U.S. Border Patrol officers arrested and prosecuted a U.S. citizen who recorded a violent immigration stop. Detaining and sentencing Kenny Laynez-Ambrosio after he filmed officers' treatment of undocumented passengers highlighted risks to bystanders' rights during aggressive immigration enforcement. (26 Jul 2025)

2. The Trump Administration expanded immigration arrests and moved to strip legal status from over one million immigrants. Ending the CHNV parole program and targeting 3,000 arrests per day destabilized immigrant workers' lives and labor markets, deepening a tiered system of rights based on status. (29 Jul 2025)

3. The Trump Administration urged DACA recipients to self-deport despite no rule change. Pressuring DACA beneficiaries to leave the country without formal policy shifts weaponized uncertainty to erode protections for a legally recognized group. (29 Jul 2025)

4. Department of Justice requested detailed noncitizen voter data from California counties. Seeking extensive personal information on noncitizens on voter rolls under a fraud pretext risked chilling participation and enabling targeted voter suppression. (29 Jul 2025)

5. Immigration officials at San Francisco International Airport detained a South Korean scientist with a green card without explanation or attorney access. Holding a lawful permanent resident researcher incommunicado underscored due process vulnerabilities for immigrants even with established legal status. (29 Jul 2025)

6. North Carolina General Assembly rescheduled and then held a Judiciary I hearing on a voter suppression bill under constrained public access. Moving the HB 958 hearing to a low-visibility slot and then proceeding despite protests limited public input on legislation seen as undermining free and fair elections. (28 Jul 2025; 30 Jul 2025)

7. North Carolina legislature overrode the governor's vetoes on anti-immigrant, anti-LGBTQ, and deregulatory bills. Enacting HB 318 and HB 805 over

vetoed curtailed protections for immigrants and transgender people and loosened environmental rules, narrowing rights for targeted groups. (29 Jul 2025)

8. Texas Republicans released a congressional map projected to give the party five more seats. A new Texas map consolidating Democratic voters and diluting minority communities' influence exemplified partisan gerrymandering that weakens electoral competition and representation. (30 Jul 2025)

9. Governor Gavin Newsom floated a special election to alter California's redistricting process in response to Texas. Considering a voter-approved change to California's independent commission to counter Texas's gerrymander highlighted interstate escalation over control of House representation. (1 Aug 2025)

10. Popular Information and North Carolina courts exposed and then corrected the wrongful invalidation of 29 ballots in a state supreme court race. Investigative reporting that led to restoration of discarded ballots and a different winner in a close race demonstrated how media scrutiny can repair discrete electoral injustices. (1 Aug 2025)

11. Missouri Republican lawmakers moved to overturn multiple voter-approved initiatives, prompting backlash. Efforts to repeal measures on Medicaid expansion, marijuana, abortion, and animal welfare signaled legislative willingness to disregard direct democratic outcomes. (29 Jul 2025)

12. The Trump Administration invoked the Alien Enemies Act to deport Venezuelan migrants without hearings. Using an 18th-century law to justify warrantless raids and deportations of Venezuelans as enemy aliens bypassed normal due process and expanded executive power over noncitizens. (31 Jul 2025)

13. Florida and federal authorities operated the Alligator Alcatraz detention camp under conditions alleged to deny due process and humane treatment. Reports of detainees held without charges, barred from lawyers, and living in squalid conditions at Alligator Alcatraz illustrated a legal black hole for immigration detainees. (28 Jul 2025; 31 Jul 2025)

14. Stewart Detention Center in Georgia placed a double-amputee detainee in solitary confinement after he refused to enter a flooded area. Punishing a disabled immigrant for protecting his prosthetics highlighted systemic neglect and punitive practices toward vulnerable detainees. (31 Jul 2025)

15. Cibola County Correctional Center staff and FBI investigators were implicated in drug smuggling and lethal overdoses among detainees. An FBI probe into staff-facilitated drug trafficking and deaths at a mixed-use detention facility underscored how privatized incarceration can endanger detainees' basic rights and safety. (1 Aug 2025)

16. The Trump Administration cut over \$1 trillion from Medicaid and advanced SNAP restrictions affecting noncitizens and the poor. Combined Medicaid and SNAP retrenchments targeted low-income and immigrant households, weakening social rights and deepening economic precarity for disfavored groups. (27 Jul 2025; 1 Aug 2025)

17. The Trump Administration pushed Congress to defund gender-affirming care through appropriations riders. Seeking to bar federal funds for gender-affirming care in multiple appropriations bills used budget levers to restrict healthcare access for transgender people nationwide. (28 Jul 2025)

18. Vice President J.D. Vance advocated an exclusionary, ancestry-based definition of American citizenship. Arguing that descendants of Civil War fighters have a stronger claim to America than others promoted a hierarchical vision of belonging at odds with civic equality. (28 Jul 2025)

19. The Trump Administration mandated antisemitism trainings at universities designed by pro-Israel groups as a funding condition. Requiring one-sided antisemitism curricula that equate anti-Zionism with antisemitism as a prerequisite for federal funds risked suppressing certain political speech on campuses. (30 Jul 2025)

20. Oklahoma Schools Chief Ryan Walters announced a "MAGA Exam" for out-of-state teachers seeking certification. Requiring teachers from liberal states to pass an ideologically framed exam tied certification to adherence to "America First" narratives, politicizing entry into the profession. (31 Jul 2025)

21. Pro-Palestinian protesters and New York law enforcement clashed at Senator Chuck Schumer's office, leading to mass arrests including elected officials. Arresting demonstrators and local officials protesting Gaza policy highlighted tensions between protest rights and policing in high-profile political spaces. (1 Aug 2025)

22. The Trump Administration withheld and then restored large sums of education and university funding over ideological disputes. Using funding freezes and settlements with Columbia and Duke to force changes in hiring and diversity practices leveraged economic pressure to reshape academic environments. (30 Jul 2025; 31 Jul 2025)

23. The Trump Administration threatened to defund sanctuary cities and praised aggressive ICE tactics. Legislation to strip funds and tax breaks from sanctuary jurisdictions sought to coerce localities into deeper cooperation with federal immigration enforcement. (28 Jul 2025)

24. The Trump Administration and FEMA expanded detention infrastructure and support for migrant confinement. New detention grants and use of harsh facilities like Cecot and Alligator Alcatraz entrenched a

carceral approach to migration that sidelines due process and humane treatment. (26 Jul 2025; 28 Jul 2025; 31 Jul 2025)

## Economic Structure

1. The Trump Administration announced release of over \$5 billion in previously withheld education funding. Restoring delayed school funds under political pressure showed how executive control over disbursement can be used to create uncertainty in core public services. (26 Jul 2025)

2. The Trump Administration impounded National Institutes of Health funding before later reversing course. Temporarily blocking billions for external NIH research, then backing down, signaled willingness to use health research funding as a bargaining chip in broader political fights. (26 Jul 2025; 29 Jul 2025)

3. Congress and President Trump enacted historic Medicaid funding cuts paired with tax cuts and deportation funding. Mandating the largest Medicaid reduction in history while expanding deportation resources reallocated federal resources away from health security toward enforcement priorities. (26 Jul 2025)

4. The Trump Administration implemented a new tariff regime on European, Japanese, British and other imports. Imposing broad tariffs of 10-20% or more on major trading partners risked higher consumer prices and supply disruptions while centralizing trade leverage in the executive. (26 Jul 2025; 27 Jul 2025; 29 Jul 2025; 30 Jul 2025; 31 Jul 2025)

5. The Trump Administration cut more than half of federal funding for community gun violence prevention grants. Terminating 69 of 145 violence intervention grants reduced federal support for local public safety programs, prioritizing other enforcement and fiscal goals over community-based prevention. (29 Jul 2025)

6. Securities and Exchange Commission approved a Trump Jr.-backed gun company for public trading. Greenlighting a gun firm tied to the president's son soon after the new chair attended another Trump Jr. event raised concerns about regulatory capture and favoritism in capital markets. (28 Jul 2025)

7. Treasury Department reallocated nearly \$934 million from nuclear modernization to renovate Trump's Air Force One. Shifting almost a billion dollars from missile modernization to refit a Qatar-gifted jet as Air Force One prioritized presidential prestige over other defense investments, with limited transparency. (29 Jul 2025)

8. Interior Secretary Doug Burgum ended federal subsidies for wind and

solar energy projects. Eliminating support for renewables while maintaining fossil fuel advantages reshaped energy markets away from low-carbon sources, privileging incumbent industries. (30 Jul 2025)

9. President Trump imposed a 50% tariff on copper imports. A steep copper tariff threatened higher costs for construction and electronics, using trade barriers to favor domestic producers at the expense of downstream consumers. (30 Jul 2025)

10. Federal Reserve and President Trump responded to rising inflation while Trump attacked Fed Chair Jerome Powell. The Fed held rates amid tariff-driven inflation as Trump publicly blamed and politicized Powell, undermining confidence in independent monetary policy during economic strain. (30 Jul 2025)

11. President Trump criticized an unfavorable jobs report as rigged and fired the BLS commissioner. Dismissing the head of the Bureau of Labor Statistics after weak employment data and alleging bias threatened the integrity of official economic statistics. (31 Jul 2025)

12. The Trump Administration announced major cuts and cost shifts in the SNAP food assistance program. Raising state administrative burdens, tightening work rules, and restricting noncitizen eligibility for SNAP risked increasing hunger while offloading federal obligations onto states and poor households. (1 Aug 2025)

13. Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent promoted "Trump accounts" as a way to privatize Social Security. Describing new accounts as a backdoor to privatize Social Security signaled a structural shift from collective retirement guarantees toward individualized market exposure. (31 Jul 2025)

14. Social Security Administration abandoned a plan to sharply limit phone service after public outcry. Canceling a move that would have overwhelmed field offices preserved basic access to benefits information, showing how transparency can check service degradation. (1 Aug 2025)

15. Congress and President enacted the VA Home Loan Program Reform Act to improve veterans' housing access. Reforming VA home loans aimed to ease veterans' path to homeownership, modestly strengthening an economic support for a key constituency. (30 Jul 2025)

16. Bangladeshi government and garment industry implemented post-Rana Plaza labor reforms improving wages and safety. Raising minimum wages, auditing factories, and curbing subcontracting improved conditions and pay in Bangladesh's export sector, illustrating how regulation can align growth with worker welfare. (30 Jul 2025)

17. Bangladesh's garment sector drove substantial national economic growth and child health gains. Research showing the garment boom boosted

GDP and neonatal survival underscored how industrial employment can reshape economic and social outcomes in low-income democracies. (30 Jul 2025)

18. Anti-sweatshop activists and global brands secured safety accords that also led to factory closures and job losses in Bangladesh. Post-disaster activism and brand agreements reduced factory numbers and employment, highlighting trade-offs between labor standards and job availability in export-led development. (30 Jul 2025)

19. Xi Jinping and the Chinese government cracked down on disfavored industries and appointed loyalists over technocrats. China's selective industrial crackdowns and loyalty-based appointments concentrated economic and political power, offering a comparative model of state-led control over markets. (28 Jul 2025)

20. U.S. Census Bureau advanced multiple data collection and pretesting initiatives affecting economic and education statistics. New and renewed Census data programs on questionnaires, school finance, and digital feeds aimed to improve the quality of information underpinning fiscal and policy decisions. (30 Jul 2025; 1 Aug 2025)

21. Food and Drug Administration set extensive FY 2026 user fee rates and information collections for drugs, devices, and food safety. FDA's broad user-fee and data-collection framework shaped the cost and pace of bringing medical and food products to market, influencing industry structure and public health protections. (29 Jul 2025; 30 Jul 2025; 31 Jul 2025)

22. Environmental Protection Agency issued and reconsidered multiple environmental and chemical regulations and deadlines. EPA actions on air quality designations, chemical SNURs, pesticide cancellations, and PCE rule reconsideration adjusted the regulatory burden on industry and the strength of environmental protections. (29 Jul 2025; 30 Jul 2025; 31 Jul 2025; 1 Aug 2025)

23. Federal Communications Commission advanced spectrum, antenna, and paperwork rules affecting communications markets. FCC moves on wireless antenna collocation, satellite spectrum sharing, and information burdens shaped infrastructure deployment costs and competitive dynamics in telecom. (29 Jul 2025; 31 Jul 2025)

24. Transportation Security Administration sought revisions and extensions for pipeline security and screening service information collections. TSA's data requests for pipeline security and reimbursable screening programs affected compliance costs and oversight of critical infrastructure and private partners. (1 Aug 2025)

25. Environmental Protection Agency extended compliance deadlines for oil and gas emissions standards. Giving oil and gas operators more time to

meet emissions rules eased short-term industry burdens while delaying full implementation of pollution controls. (31 Jul 2025)

26. U.S. government maintained and adjusted Energy Star and environmental impact review information programs. Continuing Energy Star labeling data collection and publishing environmental impact statements supported transparency in environmental performance and major project impacts. (1 Aug 2025)

27. The Trump Administration and foreign partners announced trade deals with Indonesia, Pakistan, Vietnam and others involving tariffs and energy purchases. New agreements trading tariff relief for large U.S. energy and goods purchases reoriented partner economies toward U.S. exports while locking in elevated tariff baselines. (31 Jul 2025)

28. The Trump Administration announced a pilot to cover GLP-1 weight loss drugs under Medicare and Medicaid. Extending coverage for expensive GLP-1 drugs through public programs could shift large new costs onto federal and state budgets while expanding access to obesity treatments. (1 Aug 2025)

29. The Trump Administration discussed large but disputed investment pledges from Japan and Europe. Inflated claims about foreign investment commitments risked misleading the public about the real economic benefits of contentious trade negotiations. (1 Aug 2025)

## **Information, Memory, and Manipulation**

1. President Trump called for revoking NBC and ABC broadcasting licenses and labeled them partisan arms. Urging license revocations for major networks over perceived bias threatened regulatory retaliation against critical media and encouraged self-censorship. (26 Jul 2025)

2. President Trump made conflicting public claims about his relationship with Jeffrey Epstein and Virginia Giuffre. Shifting explanations about when and why he broke with Epstein, including a new story about Giuffre, muddied the historical record around his ties to a convicted sex offender. (29 Jul 2025; 30 Jul 2025)

3. Axios leadership and corporate sponsors published highly favorable coverage of Trump's second term aligned with conservative funders. A glowing assessment of Trump's presidency that downplayed harms and mirrored sponsor interests illustrated how financial ties can shape ostensibly neutral political reporting. (28 Jul 2025)

4. Department of Homeland Security posted manifest destiny imagery and repurposed artwork to promote nationalist themes. Using the "American Progress" painting and an unauthorized religious image to celebrate heritage

and homeland recast expansionist and exclusionary narratives as official identity. (28 Jul 2025)

5. The Trump Administration and DOJ pressured universities over DEI and antisemitism policies and opened investigations into academic institutions. Probes of Duke, George Mason, and others, plus mandated antisemitism trainings, used legal scrutiny and funding threats to steer campus discourse and governance. (28 Jul 2025; 29 Jul 2025; 30 Jul 2025; 31 Jul 2025)

6. Federal Communications Commission approved a CBS-Skydance merger conditioned on avoiding civil rights programs and adding a political bias monitor. Tying merger approval to content-related conditions risked entangling federal regulators in editorial decisions and chilling coverage of civil rights issues. (31 Jul 2025)

7. FCC Commissioner Anna Gomez warned that the administration was weaponizing broadcast licensing power. An FCC commissioner's public alarm about licensing being used to pressure outlets underscored institutional concern over creeping censorship via regulatory tools. (29 Jul 2025)

8. President Trump attacked media figures Jessica Tarlov and others over critical commentary. Personal insults directed at journalists and commentators who advocated gun control or criticized policy contributed to a hostile environment for independent media voices. (29 Jul 2025)

9. FBI Records/Information Dissemination Section leadership ordered Trump's name redacted from Epstein files and pressured a resisting official to retire. Directing redactions to shield Trump in FOIA releases and sidelining an internal critic showed active curation of public records to protect the president. (31 Jul 2025)

10. Popular Information and Sinclair Broadcast Group exposed and then prompted the resignation of a national anchor over biased content. Revelations that Sinclair pushed right-wing narratives as news led its lead anchor to quit, illustrating both the reach of coordinated propaganda and the role of watchdog journalism. (1 Aug 2025)

11. The Trump Administration manipulated economic narratives and data around trade deals and jobs. Overstating foreign investment pledges, disputing CBO projections, and firing the BLS chief after unfavorable data collectively undermined trust in factual economic reporting. (29 Jul 2025; 30 Jul 2025; 31 Jul 2025; 1 Aug 2025)

12. The Trump Administration used AI and opaque classification to reshape regulation and spending with limited transparency. Algorithmic deregulation and creative classification of Air Force One costs reduced public visibility into how rules and funds are being altered to serve executive priorities. (26 Jul 2025; 27 Jul 2025; 29 Jul 2025)

13. The Trump Administration and DOJ selectively pursued transparency in the Epstein and Maxwell cases. Pushing to unseal some grand jury transcripts while withholding other Epstein files and redacting Trump's name suggested a strategy of controlled disclosure to manage public perception. (28 Jul 2025; 29 Jul 2025; 30 Jul 2025; 31 Jul 2025)

14. Vice President J.D. Vance and DHS promoted narratives redefining citizenship and American history around heritage and conquest. Speeches and imagery that valorized ancestral bloodlines and manifest destiny reframed national identity in exclusionary terms, shaping how future citizens understand belonging. (28 Jul 2025)

15. Popular Information used investigative reporting to alter government and state-level decisions. Exposés on SSA phone cuts, North Carolina ballots, and Tennessee Speaker Sexton's residency and per diem abuses showed how independent media can still force institutional corrections. (1 Aug 2025)

16. President Trump made unfounded claims about ending six wars in a meeting with the UK prime minister. Boasting of having ended six wars without evidence inflated foreign policy achievements and contributed to a distorted public understanding of U.S. military engagement. (1 Aug 2025)



## **CHAPTER 3**

### **WEEK 29 (2 AUG 2025 – 8 AUG 2025): LAW, MAPS, AND MEMORY AS CONTROL**

*In a week of consolidation rather than shock, law, representation, and information were tightened to favor power while formal democratic shells stayed intact.*

This week saw intense efforts to lean toward authoritarianism, with coordinated actions across executive authority, immigration enforcement, higher education, and information control. The administration stepped up its campaign to politicize neutral state functions: firing the labor statistics chief, removing FBI leaders, and weaponizing the DOJ against Jack Smith and New York AG Letitia James. Meanwhile, immigration and detention policies became harsher—expanding ICE capacity at Fort Bliss and Indiana, solidifying ‘Alligator Alcatraz,’ and carrying out raids despite court orders. Universities faced pressure to accept ideological agreements and data mandates, with Harvard filing a lawsuit to oppose these. Aggressive gerrymandering in Texas and planned redistricting in Indiana, backed by threats of arrest and FBI involvement, increased efforts to manipulate representation structurally. Additionally, sweeping tariffs, a homelessness-criminalization order, and cuts to food aid and mRNA research combined economic and social policies to deepen inequality and weaken evidence-based governance.

#### **Power and Authority**

- i. President Donald Trump fired Bureau of Labor Statistics commissioner Erika McEntarfer after weak jobs data. Removing the chief labor statistician

in response to unfavorable jobs reports threatened the independence of economic data production, signaling that official statistics must align with presidential narratives rather than objective measurement. (2 Aug 2025; 4 Aug 2025; 5 Aug 2025; 7 Aug 2025)

2. President Donald Trump publicly pressured Federal Reserve Chair Jerome Powell to resign over interest rate policy. Calling for the Fed chair's resignation over rate decisions challenged the central bank's operational independence, risking politicized monetary policy that can undermine economic stability and democratic checks on executive influence. (2 Aug 2025)

3. President Donald Trump announced plans for a \$200 million White House ballroom funded by private donors. Authorizing a massive, donor-funded White House expansion without clear transparency on contributors blurred lines between public property and private patronage, creating potential avenues for undue influence over the presidency. (2 Aug 2025; 7 Aug 2025)

4. President Donald Trump continued efforts to undermine solar and wind energy in national energy policy. Sustained opposition to renewable energy development risked weakening long-term infrastructure resilience and economic competitiveness, centralizing power in legacy fossil sectors closely tied to existing political interests. (2 Aug 2025)

5. President Donald Trump announced he had ordered nuclear submarines positioned in response to Russian statements. Publicly brandishing nuclear deployments in response to rhetoric, apparently amid domestic political pressure, used strategic military assets as a political tool, heightening risks of miscalculation and weakening norms around restrained nuclear signaling. (2 Aug 2025)

6. President Donald Trump threatened tariffs on India over its continued imports of Russian oil. Linking punitive tariffs to India's energy dealings with Russia leveraged U.S. trade power for geopolitical aims, risking coercive economic pressure on a partner nation outside multilateral processes. (2 Aug 2025)

7. Department of Homeland Security officials drafted a memo proposing expanded military involvement in domestic immigration enforcement. Planning to deepen Defense Department participation in immigration enforcement blurred civilian-military boundaries and raised the prospect of using armed forces in roles traditionally reserved for civil authorities. (2 Aug 2025)

8. President Donald Trump directed the Pentagon to prepare potential military action against Latin American drug cartels. Ordering military planning against foreign cartels, labeled as terrorists, expanded the contemplated use of U.S. armed forces beyond traditional battlefields,

potentially bypassing normal congressional war-powers oversight. (2 Aug 2025)

9. President Donald Trump pressed the Senate to scrap the blue slip tradition for judicial nominees. Urging elimination of the blue slip custom would reduce minority-party senators' influence over judicial picks, centralizing appointment power in the executive and majority leadership. (3 Aug 2025)

10. President Donald Trump urged the Senate to cancel its August recess to accelerate confirmations. Pressuring senators to forgo recess to speed confirmations emphasized filling posts with loyalists over deliberative review, tightening executive influence over the judiciary and key offices. (3 Aug 2025)

11. President Donald Trump issued an executive order modifying tariff rates for dozens of countries. Unilaterally adjusting broad tariff schedules concentrated trade-policy power in the presidency, with potential downstream effects on prices, employment, and foreign relations absent robust legislative input. (4 Aug 2025)

12. The Trump Administration moved to block abortion services at Veterans Affairs hospitals nationwide. Seeking to end VA abortion care, even in cases of rape, incest, or health risk, used executive power to narrow veterans' healthcare rights and align federal medical policy with a specific ideological agenda. (4 Aug 2025)

13. President Donald Trump announced an AI action plan rolling back prior federal AI regulations. Loosening AI rules shifted federal posture toward rapid deployment over safeguards, affecting how automated systems may shape information flows, labor markets, and rights without strong democratic oversight. (5 Aug 2025)

14. President Donald Trump ordered creation of a White House Task Force on the 2028 Summer Olympics. Centralizing Olympic security and logistics planning in a presidential task force under DHS expanded executive coordination over local policing, immigration, and transportation decisions tied to a major event. (5 Aug 2025)

15. Attorney General Pam Bondi ordered a grand jury investigation into alleged 2016 election treason by Obama officials. Launching a grand jury probe into debunked claims that Obama-era officials fabricated evidence against Trump used prosecutorial tools to advance a political narrative about past elections. (3 Aug 2025; 5 Aug 2025)

16. President Donald Trump threatened to federalize Washington, D.C., citing crime despite falling crime rates. Threatening to assume direct control over D.C. governance in the name of public safety, contrary to FBI data, signaled willingness to override local autonomy based on politicized crime narratives. (7 Aug 2025)

17. President Donald Trump announced a new census plan excluding undocumented immigrants from the count. Ordering work on a census that omits undocumented residents directly challenged the constitutional requirement to count all persons, threatening to skew representation and federal funding toward favored constituencies. (7 Aug 2025; 8 Aug 2025)

18. President Donald Trump directed the Department of Commerce to begin a census excluding undocumented immigrants. Reiterating instructions to exclude undocumented people from the census operationalized a strategy to reduce political power and resources for immigrant-heavy areas, entrenching unequal representation. (8 Aug 2025)

19. Secretary of Health and Human Services Robert F. Kennedy Jr. canceled roughly \$500 million in federal mRNA vaccine research contracts. Terminating dozens of mRNA vaccine projects on contested scientific grounds shifted federal health research away from a key platform, potentially weakening preparedness and subordinating evidence to ideological preferences. (6 Aug 2025; 7 Aug 2025; 8 Aug 2025)

20. President Donald Trump issued an executive order imposing 25% tariffs on imports from India over Russian oil purchases. Imposing broad tariffs on India in response to its Russian oil imports used trade sanctions as a unilateral foreign-policy tool, with potential blowback for economic stability and alliances. (6 Aug 2025)

21. President Donald Trump signed an executive order criminalizing public homelessness and promoting institutionalization. Directing states to crack down on public camping and move unhoused people into long-term institutions expanded coercive responses to poverty and addiction, risking civil-rights violations without addressing structural causes. (7 Aug 2025)

22. President Donald Trump signed an executive action requiring universities to submit detailed admissions data on race neutrality. Mandating granular admissions reporting to prove race-neutrality extended federal leverage over campus composition and could chill diversity efforts, especially at institutions reliant on federal funds. (7 Aug 2025)

23. President Donald Trump issued an executive order allowing crypto, private equity, and real estate in 401(k) plans. Opening retirement accounts to speculative alternative assets expanded investment choice but exposed ordinary savers to higher risk and fees, benefiting financial firms while weakening traditional consumer protections. (7 Aug 2025)

24. President Donald Trump issued an executive order targeting alleged political "debanking" and easing scrutiny of crypto assets. Framing bank compliance decisions as ideological discrimination and ordering regulators

to curb such practices risked politicizing financial supervision and weakening safeguards around high-risk assets. (7 Aug 2025)

25. President Donald Trump issued an executive order tightening oversight of federal grantmaking to align with administration priorities. Requiring senior appointees to screen grants for ideological fit increased the risk that federal funding decisions would reward aligned groups and penalize disfavored communities or viewpoints. (7 Aug 2025)

26. President Donald Trump ordered a seven-day federal crackdown on violent crime in Washington, D.C. Deploying federal officers for an intensive D.C. crime operation despite falling crime rates normalized emergency-style interventions that can sideline local control and invite civil-rights abuses. (8 Aug 2025)

## **Institutions and Governance**

1. Office of Special Counsel opened a Hatch Act investigation into former special counsel Jack Smith. Probing Jack Smith's Trump investigations for alleged political activity, at the request of partisan actors, risked chilling future prosecutions of powerful figures by casting routine enforcement as partisan misconduct. (2 Aug 2025)

2. U.S. Senate confirmed Jeanine Pirro as U.S. Attorney for the District of Columbia. Installing a staunch Trump ally with a record of election-fraud claims as D.C.'s top federal prosecutor deepened concerns that charging decisions in a pivotal jurisdiction would reflect loyalty rather than impartial law enforcement. (2 Aug 2025; 3 Aug 2025)

3. Michigan Governor Gretchen Whitmer replaced a clean-energy advocate on the utilities commission with an industry-aligned member. Swapping a regulator critical of rate hikes and fossil dependence for an industry-friendly appointee shifted a key oversight body toward utility interests, affecting long-term energy affordability and climate policy. (3 Aug 2025)

4. Federal courts ordered review of sealed records in the Giuffre v. Maxwell defamation case for possible unsealing. Directing a lower court to reconsider unsealing Epstein-related documents modestly advanced transparency in a high-profile abuse case involving powerful figures. (3 Aug 2025)

5. U.S. House Oversight Committee issued subpoenas to Bill and Hillary Clinton and former top law enforcement officials over Epstein. Subpoenaing former presidents, attorneys general, and FBI directors for Epstein-related testimony expanded congressional scrutiny of elite accountability, though the partisan framing risked turning oversight into spectacle. (5 Aug 2025; 7 Aug 2025)

6. Coalition of nonprofits, tribes, and local governments sued the EPA to reinstate the congressionally mandated Environmental and Climate Justice grant program. Challenging EPA's termination of a \$3 billion climate-justice program tested whether the executive branch can unilaterally nullify spending directives enacted by Congress. (5 Aug 2025)

7. Senator Jon Ossoff's office released a report documenting hundreds of alleged human rights abuses in ICE detention. Publishing extensive evidence of abuse and DHS obstruction at immigration facilities underscored the importance—and fragility—of congressional oversight over powerful enforcement agencies. (6 Aug 2025; 7 Aug 2025)

8. Senator Raphael Warnock and colleagues reintroduced the John R. Lewis Voting Rights Advancement Act. Reviving legislation to restore and expand Voting Rights Act protections sought to rebuild federal safeguards against discriminatory election laws and districting. (6 Aug 2025)

9. U.S. Supreme Court heard a challenge to Louisiana's congressional map with two majority-Black districts. Reviewing whether a remedial map with two Black-majority districts violates equal-protection limits will shape how far states can go in using race to secure minority representation under the Voting Rights Act. (6 Aug 2025)

10. House Ethics Committee reported it could not determine if Rep. Mike Kelly's wife traded on nonpublic information. Failing to resolve whether a lawmaker's spouse used confidential information for profit highlighted gaps in congressional ethics enforcement that can erode public trust. (5 Aug 2025)

11. Federal courts temporarily halted construction work at the Alligator Alcatraz immigration detention facility. Pausing new construction at a controversial Everglades detention center over environmental concerns showed the judiciary still exercising checks on executive detention infrastructure, even as operations continued. (7 Aug 2025)

12. Democracy Forward sued the DOJ and FBI for records on the Epstein investigation and Trump communications. Litigating to obtain withheld Epstein-related records sought to enforce FOIA transparency in a case with major implications for elite accountability and public trust in justice institutions. (8 Aug 2025)

13. U.S. Court of Appeals panel vacated a contempt finding against the Trump administration over deportations to El Salvador. Overturning a district judge's contempt ruling for violating a deportation halt order limited judicial leverage over executive immigration actions, especially under the Alien Enemies Act. (8 Aug 2025)

14. Harvard University filed lawsuits challenging federal funding cuts and student-visa restrictions. Harvard's litigation against sweeping funding and

visa penalties tested whether universities can use the courts to resist federal attempts to reshape higher-education governance and speech. (7 Aug 2025)

15. U.S. Department of Justice issued subpoenas to New York Attorney General Letitia James over her Trump and NRA cases. Targeting a state AG who successfully prosecuted Trump and the NRA suggested federal investigative power was being turned against a prominent corruption watchdog, raising fears of retaliatory enforcement. (8 Aug 2025)

16. Federal Election Commission canceled an upcoming open meeting and scheduled a closed compliance meeting. Canceling a public FEC session while proceeding with a closed compliance meeting reduced short-term transparency around election-regulation deliberations at a sensitive political moment. (7 Aug 2025)

17. U.S. Army planned to restore a Confederate memorial at Arlington National Cemetery. Restoring a Confederate monument at a national cemetery used military-managed commemorative space to elevate a contested historical narrative, influencing public memory of the Civil War and race. (7 Aug 2025)

18. Federal judiciary ordered return and data wiping of seized devices in a Louisiana obscenity case. Mandating that sensitive electronic evidence be erased before returning devices balanced privacy concerns against public interest in potential misconduct records, with implications for future access to digital evidence. (4 Aug 2025)

19. Federal Acquisition Regulatory Council clarified and eased preaward registration rules for federal contractors, especially small entities. Adjusting procurement registration requirements aimed to reduce technical barriers for small businesses seeking federal contracts, modestly broadening access to government markets. (7 Aug 2025)

20. Environmental Protection Agency sought nominations for the Children's Health Protection Advisory Committee. Refreshing membership on a children's health advisory body maintained a channel for expert input into environmental rulemaking affecting vulnerable populations. (7 Aug 2025)

## Civil Rights and Dissent

1. Texas Governor Greg Abbott threatened Democratic lawmakers who fled the state over redistricting with removal and felony charges. Branding quorum-breaking legislators as potential felons and threatening to oust them used criminal law and removal powers to coerce political opponents in a dispute over representation. (2 Aug 2025; 3 Aug 2025)

2. Texas House Democrats left the state to deny a quorum and block a

mid-decade gerrymandered redistricting map. Fleeing Texas to prevent a vote on a map designed to add Republican seats was an extreme procedural tactic to resist structural manipulation of electoral boundaries. (3 Aug 2025; 4 Aug 2025; 7 Aug 2025)

3. Texas legislature imposed \$500 daily fines and authorized civil arrest warrants for absent lawmakers. Using financial penalties and civil arrest powers to compel attendance in a redistricting fight weaponized legislative rules against minority-party protest tactics. (3 Aug 2025; 5 Aug 2025; 7 Aug 2025)

4. Texas Attorney General Ken Paxton sought to vacate seats of absent Democrats and investigated Beto O'Rourke's support group. Attempting to declare Democratic seats vacant and probing a group funding their stay out of state extended legal pressure beyond lawmakers to allied civil-society actors. (5 Aug 2025; 7 Aug 2025)

5. Vice President J.D. Vance and Republican leaders encouraged Indiana Republicans to redraw congressional maps to favor the GOP. High-level lobbying for mid-cycle redistricting in Indiana extended partisan map-engineering efforts beyond Texas, threatening to further insulate incumbents from voter accountability. (7 Aug 2025)

6. Democratic governors and party leaders prepared legal and political challenges to Republican gerrymanders and considered counter-maps. Planning to fight GOP maps in court while potentially drawing aggressive Democratic maps in blue states signaled an arms race in partisan redistricting that can distance seat outcomes from voter preferences. (3 Aug 2025)

7. President Donald Trump and Texas Republicans pushed a mid-decade Texas redistricting to flip multiple Democratic U.S. House seats. Coordinating a mid-cycle map change at presidential urging to secure House control exemplified top-down manipulation of district lines to entrench partisan advantage. (3 Aug 2025)

8. Rep. Kevin Kiley and Rep. Blake Moore opposed mid-decade gerrymandering and proposed a national ban. Republican lawmakers criticizing Texas's mid-cycle map and introducing a ban on such redistricting showed intra-party resistance to escalating structural manipulation of elections. (7 Aug 2025)

9. President Donald Trump ordered a new census framework excluding undocumented immigrants from apportionment counts. Redefining who counts in the census to omit undocumented residents would systematically reduce representation and funding for immigrant-rich communities, stratifying political voice by legal status. (7 Aug 2025; 8 Aug 2025)

10. The Trump Administration and Congress cut food assistance and

advanced an order criminalizing homelessness and public drug use. Simultaneously reducing basic income support and encouraging punitive responses to homelessness and addiction increased legal and economic pressure on the poorest residents, weakening their capacity to participate fully in civic life. (6 Aug 2025; 7 Aug 2025)

ii. DHS Secretary Kristi Noem and ICE leadership expanded migrant detention centers and workforce under a mass-deportation agenda. Building new detention complexes and rapidly enlarging ICE staff, including via aggressive recruitment, entrenched a carceral approach to migration that often sweeps in people without criminal records. (5 Aug 2025; 6 Aug 2025)

12. U.S. Border Patrol agents conducted a Home Depot raid in Los Angeles despite a court order limiting indiscriminate sweeps. Arresting 16 undocumented workers in an operation that appeared to defy a federal injunction against racial-profiling raids raised serious concerns about respect for judicial limits on enforcement. (6 Aug 2025)

13. ICE and private prison operators expanded use of harsh detention facilities such as Alligator Alcatraz and Fort Bliss. Ramping up capacity at remote, criticized detention centers deepened a system where migrants—many without criminal records—face punitive conditions with limited oversight or recourse. (6 Aug 2025; 7 Aug 2025)

14. Texas and federal law enforcement leaders sought FBI assistance and filed out-of-state warrants to locate and arrest Texas Democrats. Inviting federal agents into a state legislative standoff and pursuing civil warrants across state lines blurred jurisdictional boundaries and escalated coercive tactics against elected opposition. (5 Aug 2025; 7 Aug 2025)

15. New York Police Department arrested over 40 protesters at a Gaza-related demonstration outside Trump's New York hotel. Detaining dozens of demonstrators blocking a street near a Trump-branded property highlighted tensions between protest rights and policing of high-profile, politically sensitive locations. (5 Aug 2025)

16. New York City police arrested protesters at an anti-ICE demonstration outside a federal immigration court. Arresting activists alleging a covert detention site at a federal courthouse underscored how direct challenges to immigration enforcement can trigger swift law-enforcement responses. (8 Aug 2025)

17. Democracy Out Loud and allied groups organized an antifascist direct-action protest in Raleigh, North Carolina. Coordinating a public antifascist demonstration reflected ongoing grassroots mobilization to defend democratic norms and signal resistance to perceived authoritarian trends. (2 Aug 2025)

18. Indiana protesters demonstrated at the Statehouse against redistricting efforts during JD Vance's visit. Public protests inside the Indiana Statehouse against partisan map-drawing showed citizens using assembly rights to contest structural changes to representation. (8 Aug 2025)

19. Unknown perpetrator issued a bomb threat that forced evacuation of Texas lawmakers' Illinois hotel. A bomb threat targeting the out-of-state refuge of Texas Democrats underscored the physical risks and intimidation tactics surrounding high-stakes fights over voting maps. (7 Aug 2025)

20. Rep. Mike Flood faced intense constituent backlash at a town hall over immigration and FEMA fund reallocations. Voters' vocal opposition to diverting FEMA resources toward detention facilities illustrated democratic pushback against policies that prioritize enforcement over disaster relief. (7 Aug 2025)

21. U.S. Air Force leadership denied early retirement to transgender service members, forcing separations without benefits. Revoking previously approved early retirements for transgender personnel effectively pushed them out without pensions, raising discrimination concerns within the military ranks. (7 Aug 2025)

22. Disney and Gina Carano settled a wrongful-termination lawsuit over Carano's firing from The Mandalorian. Resolving a dispute over whether a high-profile actor was fired for controversial speech highlighted ongoing tensions between corporate reputational concerns and individual expression in employment. (8 Aug 2025)

## Economic Structure

1. U.S. banks increased loans to private credit funds to 14% of non-bank lending portfolios. Growing bank exposure to opaque private-credit markets heightened systemic financial risk, potentially amplifying the impact of downturns on the broader economy and public finances. (2 Aug 2025)

2. Meta Platforms sought about \$30 billion in loans from private-credit lenders for AI data centers. Relying on large private-credit financing for AI infrastructure deepened corporate dependence on lightly regulated capital channels, with potential spillovers for financial stability and market concentration. (2 Aug 2025)

3. Microsoft nearly tripled finance leases for data centers since 2023 to \$46 billion. Aggressive, debt-like financing of AI data centers by a dominant tech firm underscored how capital-intensive digital infrastructure can entrench corporate power and shape future labor and information markets. (2 Aug 2025)

4. Environmental Protection Agency opened public comment on applications for new pesticide active ingredients and uses. Soliciting input on new pesticide registrations and uses maintained a formal avenue for public participation in decisions that affect environmental health and agricultural economics. (4 Aug 2025)
5. Federal Communications Commission streamlined obsolete regulations and updated competitive bidding rules for spectrum auctions. Removing outdated telecom rules and revising small-business bidding credits aimed to modernize spectrum markets, with consequences for competition among large carriers and smaller providers. (4 Aug 2025)
6. Food and Drug Administration issued multiple determinations and corrections affecting generic drug approvals and withdrawals. Clarifying which drugs were withdrawn for safety reasons and correcting prior notices helped maintain accurate regulatory baselines for generic competition and pharmaceutical availability. (4 Aug 2025)
7. Transportation Security Administration sought OMB approval to extend and revise information collections on canine adoptions and pipeline security. Updating data-collection programs for canine adoption and critical pipeline facilities balanced administrative burden with ongoing security and public-engagement needs. (4 Aug 2025)
8. Indian government maintained restrictive labor and land-conversion laws while promoting the Make in India program. India's mix of rigid labor rules, difficult land acquisition, and targeted industrial policy shaped which firms can scale, influencing inequality and the country's integration into global supply chains. (4 Aug 2025)
9. The Trump Administration delayed and then proposed Medicare rules that preserved high payments for unproven skin substitutes. Stalling a cost-cutting rule and advancing a replacement favorable to a major donor's company allowed continued Medicare spending on expensive, weakly supported products, intertwining public funds with private influence. (4 Aug 2025)
10. The Trump Administration reversed a policy tying disaster-preparedness aid to non-boycott certifications of Israeli companies. Dropping a requirement that states forswear boycotts of Israeli firms as a condition for aid reduced overt politicization of disaster funding, though anti-discrimination framing remained. (4 Aug 2025)
11. Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services delayed a Biden-era rule restricting coverage of certain skin substitutes lacking evidence. Postponing tighter coverage criteria kept Medicare paying billions for questionable treat-

ments, weakening efforts to align public spending with clinical value. (4 Aug 2025)

12. The Trump Administration and Congress enacted a spending bill cutting food assistance for about 22.3 million families while preserving tax cuts. Reducing basic nutrition benefits for low-income households while maintaining tax advantages for the wealthy shifted fiscal burdens downward, deepening material inequality and precarity. (6 Aug 2025)

13. President Donald Trump imposed broad new tariffs on imports from more than 60 countries. A new wave of tariffs raised consumer prices and disrupted supply chains, using trade barriers as a blunt instrument that disproportionately affects lower-income households and small businesses. (8 Aug 2025)

14. President Donald Trump announced plans for a 100% tariff on imported semiconductors and chips, with select exemptions. Threatening steep chip tariffs while exempting favored firms used trade policy to reward compliant investors and pressure others, with major implications for technology supply chains and prices. (7 Aug 2025)

15. President Donald Trump considered a 100% tariff on Spain after it chose European fighter jets over the U.S. F-35. Floating punitive tariffs in response to a defense-procurement decision blurred lines between commercial trade tools and retaliation for sovereign purchasing choices by an ally. (7 Aug 2025)

16. GEO Group reported strong profits driven partly by lucrative ICE detention contracts. High earnings and a large stock buyback funded by immigration-detention contracts illustrated how private prison firms profit from expanded enforcement, creating incentives for harsher policies. (7 Aug 2025)

17. The Trump Administration approved a \$231.8 million contract to build and operate a 5,000-bed ICE facility at Fort Bliss. Awarding a large detention contract to a logistics firm with no prior jail experience deepened reliance on private contractors for core coercive functions, tying immigration policy to profit motives. (7 Aug 2025)

18. Con Edison disconnected power to over 88,000 New York households while seeking an 11% rate hike. Mass shutoffs during extreme weather, alongside a proposed rate increase, highlighted how monopoly utilities can impose severe hardship on low-income customers while pursuing higher returns. (8 Aug 2025)

19. Paramount and Skydance Media, with Trump administration regulators completed a billion-dollar media merger shortly after CBS canceled Stephen Colbert's show. Approving a major media consolidation soon after a

high-profile critic's show was canceled raised concerns that regulatory decisions and corporate strategy could jointly narrow critical media voices. (8 Aug 2025)

20. President Donald Trump and Congress raised average U.S. import tariffs to about 18%, the highest in nearly a century. Sustained high tariffs across many goods contributed to economic contraction in several sectors, with small firms and working-class consumers bearing disproportionate costs of the trade agenda. (7 Aug 2025; 8 Aug 2025)

21. President Donald Trump and Senator Josh Hawley advanced the HONEST Act stock-trading ban while exempting Trump from divestment requirements. Designing a trading-ban bill whose divestiture rules would not apply to the sitting president preserved his ability to hold conflicting assets while tightening rules on others. (5 Aug 2025)

22. The Trump Administration and Qatar accepted a \$400 million luxury jet from the Qatari state. Receiving an extremely valuable aircraft from a foreign government raised serious conflict-of-interest and emoluments concerns, suggesting foreign wealth could buy favor with U.S. decision-makers. (6 Aug 2025)

23. Environmental Protection Agency issued multiple pesticide risk evaluations, exemptions, cancellations, and SIP approvals. A series of pesticide and air-quality decisions adjusted the regulatory balance between environmental protection, agricultural interests, and industrial operators across several states. (5 Aug 2025; 6 Aug 2025; 7 Aug 2025; 8 Aug 2025)

24. Federal Communications Commission tightened security rules for telecom certification bodies and updated several information collections. Requiring that equipment-certification entities not be controlled by listed foreign adversaries and revising data-collection rules sought to protect telecom infrastructure while managing regulatory burdens. (7 Aug 2025; 8 Aug 2025)

25. Food and Drug Administration sought comment on multiple device-related information collections and guidance documents. Proposed data collections on conflicts of interest, humanitarian devices, and device communications, plus draft guidance on iron sucrose, aimed to refine oversight of medical products and expert participation. (7 Aug 2025; 8 Aug 2025)

26. Food and Drug Administration announced a public meeting and draft framework to encourage onshoring drug manufacturing. Exploring incentives to relocate pharmaceutical production to the U.S. sought to strengthen supply-chain resilience and reduce dependence on foreign manufacturing for critical medicines. (8 Aug 2025)

27. Drug Enforcement Administration processed a bulk-manufacturing

application and formalized dipentylone's Schedule I listing. Clarifying controlled-substance codes and licensing for reference-standard production maintained the legal framework governing dangerous drugs while enabling scientific and forensic work. (8 Aug 2025)

## Information, Memory, and Manipulation

1. The Trump Administration removed official transcripts of some presidential remarks from White House channels. Taking down official transcripts reduced the permanence and accessibility of presidential statements, weakening the documentary record that underpins accountability and historical understanding. (3 Aug 2025)

2. Library of Congress temporarily removed sections of the Constitution Annotated website due to a coding error. The brief disappearance of habeas corpus and foreign-emoluments provisions from an official online resource raised alarms about the reliability of digital access to foundational legal texts. (6 Aug 2025; 7 Aug 2025)

3. FBI withheld over 10,000 pages of Epstein investigation records while releasing some under FOIA. Processing records slowly and invoking law-enforcement exemptions to keep thousands of Epstein-related pages sealed limited public insight into how authorities handled a major elite-abuse case. (3 Aug 2025)

4. The Trump Administration and State Department softened human-rights reporting on El Salvador, Israel, and Russia and omitted LGBTQ+ references. Editing annual rights reports to downplay abuses and erase LGBTQ+ categories signaled a shift toward shielding favored governments and narrowing the official record of violations. (3 Aug 2025; 8 Aug 2025)

5. President Donald Trump attacked the Bureau of Labor Statistics and claimed jobs data were rigged. Alleging that routine statistical revisions were partisan manipulation undermined trust in neutral economic data, making it easier to dismiss unfavorable indicators as conspiratorial. (3 Aug 2025)

6. President Donald Trump sued the Wall Street Journal's parent company and sought Rupert Murdoch's deposition over Epstein coverage. Launching a \$10 billion lawsuit and pressing for Murdoch's testimony over accurate reporting on Epstein ties used civil courts to intimidate critical media and potentially chill investigative journalism. (5 Aug 2025)

7. Department of Homeland Security issued a recruitment message urging citizens to "Serve your country! Defend your culture!". Using culture-defense rhetoric reminiscent of extremist propaganda in official

recruitment normalized framing enforcement work as a civilizational struggle, potentially stigmatizing perceived out-groups. (7 Aug 2025)

8. Immigration and Customs Enforcement launched a massive PR and recruitment campaign targeting youth and former officers. Planning an "awareness saturation" media blitz to recruit thousands of new agents leveraged modern marketing tools to normalize and expand a controversial enforcement agency. (6 Aug 2025)

9. FBI released 2024 crime statistics showing significant declines in violent and property crime. Publishing data that contradicted political claims of a crime wave provided an empirical check on fear-based narratives, though limited media amplification blunted its corrective impact. (6 Aug 2025; 7 Aug 2025)

10. Major U.S. media outlets gave minimal coverage to FBI data showing historic crime declines. Underreporting large drops in crime while previously amplifying spikes risked leaving the public with a distorted sense of danger, shaping support for punitive policies. (7 Aug 2025)

11. Federal Communications Commission deleted an item on advanced telecom deployment from its open-meeting agenda. Dropping a planned inquiry into broadband deployment from a public meeting reduced near-term transparency around how the FCC evaluates nationwide access to advanced communications. (8 Aug 2025)

12. National Archives and Records Administration invited public comment on proposed federal records-disposition schedules. Seeking input on which agency records can be destroyed or preserved gave the public a voice in shaping the long-term documentary record of government actions. (6 Aug 2025)

13. U.S. Army decided to restore a Confederate memorial at Arlington National Cemetery. Re-elevating a Confederate monument in a national cemetery influenced how future generations interpret the Civil War, race, and loyalty, embedding a particular narrative in official commemorative space. (7 Aug 2025)

14. The Trump Administration and Education Department used funding leverage and settlements to reshape university policies and curricula. Forcing Brown, Columbia, and UCLA to adopt contested definitions and oversight structures in exchange for restored funds or settlement terms pressured universities to align teaching and governance with federal ideological preferences. (7 Aug 2025)

15. The Trump Administration and allied media figures advanced debunked narratives about a 2016 conspiracy against Trump despite Durham annex findings. Newly unclassified Durham materials undercut claims of an

Obama-era plot, yet those narratives continued to circulate, illustrating how official findings can struggle to dislodge entrenched disinformation. (2 Aug 2025)

16. President Donald Trump and allies continued promoting false or exaggerated claims about crime and election fraud despite contrary data. Persisting in narratives of rampant crime and stolen elections, even as official statistics and court rulings contradicted them, entrenched a parallel information ecosystem that undermines shared factual baselines. (3 Aug 2025; 7 Aug 2025; 8 Aug 2025)

## **CHAPTER 4**

### **WEEK 30 (9 AUG 2025 – 15 AUG 2025): EMERGENCY AS METHOD IN WASHINGTON**

*A manufactured crime crisis in the capital anchors a week of legal experiments, militarized governance, and quiet capture of neutral institutions.*

This week demonstrates a forceful consolidation of executive power, with Washington, D.C., effectively serving as a testing ground for federal overreach. Trump's declaration of a crime emergency, repeated deployments of National Guard and federal agents, and efforts to federalize the D.C. police push strongly toward emergency normalization, the weaponization of federal forces against disliked jurisdictions, and aligning security agencies with regime priorities. Similar actions—such as threats to overturn D.C. home rule, prosecution threats against sanctuary cities, and immigration raids with lethal outcomes—extend this pattern across the nation. Institutional safeguards respond unpredictably: courts restore a database on spending and democracy funding, block some DEI and detention abuses, and partially reverse the D.C. takeover, but an appeals court approves mass layoffs at the CFPB and cuts to foreign aid, cementing the capture of key agencies. Meanwhile, Christian nationalist and personalist agendas advance through Hegseth's attacks on women's and LGBTQ rights, as well as religiously influenced military policies, while statistical and cultural institutions become politicized.

## Power and Authority

1. The Trump Administration and Bureau of Land Management moved to open most of the National Petroleum Reserve-Alaska to oil and gas drilling. Expanding drilling access on a vast federal reserve shifted control of public land toward extractive interests, weakening environmental safeguards and indigenous input in federal resource decisions. (9 Aug 2025)

2. President Donald Trump supported declassification and release of a sensitive report on Russian interference in the 2016 election. Backing release of a highly classified Russia interference report allowed the executive to selectively expose intelligence in ways that could reshape accountability narratives around past elections. (9 Aug 2025)

3. President Donald Trump nominated Tammy Bruce as U.S. deputy representative to the United Nations. Elevating a partisan media figure with limited diplomatic experience to a senior UN role signaled preference for ideological loyalty over expertise in key foreign policy posts. (9 Aug 2025)

4. President Donald Trump announced plans to meet Vladimir Putin in Alaska amid discussions over Ukraine territory. Planning a summit with an indicted war criminal to discuss Ukrainian territorial concessions risked legitimizing aggression and sidelining Ukraine's sovereignty in U.S.-Russia decision-making. (9 Aug 2025; 11 Aug 2025)

5. President Donald Trump ordered homeless residents to leave Washington, D.C., under threat of federal enforcement. Threatening to expel homeless people from the capital using federal officers leveraged executive power against a vulnerable group with unclear legal authority and limited local input. (10 Aug 2025)

6. President Donald Trump directed lawyers to explore legislation overturning the D.C. Home Rule Act. Considering repeal of D.C.'s Home Rule threatened to strip residents of local self-government and concentrate direct control of the capital in the presidency and Congress. (10 Aug 2025)

7. President Donald Trump announced a press conference and criticized D.C. leadership while signaling desire to take control of city governance. Publicly attacking the D.C. mayor and hinting at federal takeover framed local governance as failed to justify expanded presidential authority over the capital. (11 Aug 2025)

8. President Donald Trump issued an executive order declaring a crime emergency in Washington, D.C. Declaring a crime emergency in D.C. enabled the White House to redirect local police for federal purposes, normalizing emergency powers to override local control despite falling crime rates. (11 Aug 2025)

9. President Donald Trump issued an executive order extending suspension of additional tariffs on Chinese imports. Adjusting China tariffs by executive order underscored presidential control over trade levers that can bypass broader deliberation while affecting economic power balances. (11 Aug 2025)

10. President Donald Trump took control of the D.C. police department and deployed federal agents and National Guard to the city. Federalizing D.C. policing and deploying Guard troops under a crime pretext concentrated coercive power in the executive and weakened local democratic oversight of law enforcement. (11 Aug 2025; 12 Aug 2025; 13 Aug 2025; 14 Aug 2025)

11. Secretary of Defense Pete Hegseth banned transgender people from serving in the U.S. military. Excluding transgender individuals from military service used state power to restrict equal access to a major public institution based on gender identity. (11 Aug 2025)

12. Secretary of Defense Pete Hegseth ordered reinstallation of a Confederate memorial at Arlington National Cemetery. Restoring a Confederate monument at a national cemetery used federal authority to elevate a revisionist narrative of slavery and the Civil War in official commemorative space. (11 Aug 2025)

13. President Donald Trump issued an executive order to build a strategic reserve of active pharmaceutical ingredients. Creating a strategic pharmaceutical ingredients reserve expanded executive control over critical drug supply chains in the name of health security. (13 Aug 2025)

14. President Donald Trump issued an executive order to streamline regulation and boost competition in the commercial space industry. Directing agencies to ease licensing and authorize novel space activities centralized industrial policy for a strategic sector in the White House. (13 Aug 2025)

15. President Donald Trump revoked a prior executive order promoting competition in the American economy. Revoking a pro-competition order signaled a shift away from federal efforts to restrain corporate concentration, reinforcing executive discretion over antitrust priorities. (13 Aug 2025)

16. President Donald Trump directed the Pentagon to use military force against certain drug cartels in Latin America. Ordering military action against foreign cartels blurred lines between law enforcement and war powers, expanding unilateral executive authority in foreign security operations. (13 Aug 2025)

17. The Trump Administration and Florida Governor Ron DeSantis announced opening of a new large-scale immigration detention facility in Florida. Expanding detention capacity for undocumented immigrants increased the state's coercive infrastructure over noncitizens, with limited transparency about conditions or due process protections. (14 Aug 2025)

18. President Donald Trump signed an executive order relaxing environmental review for commercial rocket launches. Weakening environmental review for space launches empowered the executive to prioritize rapid industrial expansion and favored firms over statutory environmental safeguards. (14 Aug 2025)

19. President Donald Trump reached an agreement with Washington, D.C., officials to scale back federal control of the Metropolitan Police Department. Negotiating a compromise that kept the D.C. police chief in charge partially reversed an earlier federal takeover, showing local and legal push-back can constrain executive overreach. (15 Aug 2025)

20. Attorney General Pam Bondi and Trump administration sent letters threatening sanctuary city leaders with prosecution and loss of federal funds over immigration policies. Threatening to prosecute and defund sanctuary jurisdictions used federal law enforcement and fiscal tools to coerce local governments over policy disagreements on immigration. (14 Aug 2025; 15 Aug 2025)

21. Secretary of Defense Pete Hegseth reposted and endorsed a video opposing women's right to vote. A sitting defense secretary's praise for arguments against women's suffrage signaled elite openness to rolling back core voting rights, undermining norms of equal political citizenship. (10 Aug 2025; 11 Aug 2025)

22. Secretary of Defense Pete Hegseth removed thousands of transgender troops and senior women and minority officers from service. Purging transgender and senior women and minority officers reshaped the military's leadership and rank-and-file along ideological and identity lines, narrowing who can serve in a key state institution. (14 Aug 2025)

23. Secretary of Defense Pete Hegseth and the Pentagon promoted Christian nationalist messaging in military recruitment and public communications. Embedding sectarian Christian themes in Pentagon recruitment blurred separation between church and state and used military messaging to normalize a specific religious ideology. (14 Aug 2025)

24. President Donald Trump directed federal officers to sweep Washington, D.C., streets in a crime crackdown. Ordering federal sweeps in a city with declining violent crime extended the executive's direct role in street-level policing, raising risks of politicized enforcement. (14 Aug 2025)

25. President Donald Trump criticized and moved to replace Bureau of Labor Statistics leadership and other statistical agency staff with loyalists. Firing the BLS commissioner over an unfavorable jobs report and installing ideological allies across statistical agencies threatened the neutrality of offi-

cial economic data used for democratic accountability. (11 Aug 2025; 13 Aug 2025)

26. The Trump Administration sent a letter to the Smithsonian Institution announcing plans to review museum exhibitions for alignment with the president's historical vision. Moving to vet Smithsonian content for "American exceptionalism" extended executive influence over national museums, risking politicization of public history and culture. (13 Aug 2025)

## Institutions and Governance

1. U.S. Court of Appeals ordered restoration of a public federal spending apportionment database. Requiring the administration to restore a spending tracker enforced statutory transparency in budget execution, strengthening congressional control and public oversight of federal funds. (9 Aug 2025)

2. U.S. District Court in Hawaii ruled commercial fishing illegal in a protected Pacific marine monument. Reinstating fishing bans in a national monument reaffirmed that executive rollbacks must follow legal process and public participation, bolstering rule-of-law constraints on environmental policy changes. (10 Aug 2025)

3. Attorney General Pam Bondi and Department of Justice fired federal prosecutor Mike Gordon after his work on January 6 cases. Removing a prosecutor known for January 6 cases, amid similar dismissals, suggested political interference in prosecutorial staffing that could chill accountability for attacks on democratic institutions. (10 Aug 2025)

4. House Veterans' Affairs Committee advanced legislation expanding veterans' access to private healthcare providers. Moving a bill to steer more veterans' care to private providers shifted public health responsibilities away from the VA, with implications for oversight and equity in service delivery. (11 Aug 2025)

5. Federal courts in California heard and advanced lawsuits challenging unauthorized deployment of troops to Los Angeles during immigration protests. Judicial review of National Guard and Marine deployments to Los Angeles tested legal limits on using military forces for domestic law enforcement without state consent. (11 Aug 2025; 12 Aug 2025)

6. Judge Paul Engelmayer denied the Trump administration's request to unseal Ghislaine Maxwell grand jury transcripts. Refusing to unseal grand jury materials preserved procedural secrecy against what the judge described as a politically motivated transparency ploy, underscoring judicial independence. (11 Aug 2025; 13 Aug 2025)

7. U.S. District Court ordered release of frozen funds to the National Endowment for Democracy. Requiring the administration to disburse congressionally appropriated democracy-promotion funds checked executive impoundment and supported independent civil society abroad. (11 Aug 2025)

8. Federal Bureau of Investigation leadership reassigned agents and de prioritized investigations into rightwing extremist groups. Scaling back scrutiny of rightwing extremists while they remain a major threat altered law enforcement priorities in ways that may favor ideologically aligned actors over public safety. (11 Aug 2025)

9. Department of Veterans Affairs leadership reduced VA medical staff and terminated labor agreements with health workers' unions. Cutting staff and union agreements at VA facilities weakened the public healthcare workforce for veterans and advanced a shift toward privatized care. (11 Aug 2025)

10. Democracy Forward Foundation sued the Department of Justice and FBI to compel release of Epstein-related records under FOIA. Litigating for Epstein files sought to enforce transparency obligations on law enforcement agencies in a high-profile case, reinforcing public access to information about elite misconduct. (11 Aug 2025)

11. Department of Justice Civil Rights Division accused George Washington University of civil rights violations over antisemitism complaints. Opening a civil rights case against a major university over alleged antisemitism at protests highlighted federal leverage over campus speech and discrimination policies. (12 Aug 2025)

12. Texas Attorney General Ken Paxton sought to jail Beto O'Rourke for allegedly violating a court order restricting fundraising. Attempting to imprison a political opponent for purportedly defying a fundraising injunction raised concerns about using state legal tools to constrain opposition organizing. (12 Aug 2025)

13. Federal judge in New York ordered ICE to improve conditions at a New York City immigrant holding facility. Mandating better food, medical access, and legal visits at an ICE facility enforced minimum standards for detainee treatment and checked abusive detention practices. (12 Aug 2025; 13 Aug 2025)

14. U.S. Department of Justice sought sanctions against immigration lawyer Joshua Schroeder for litigation to block a deportation. Pursuing sanctions against an attorney representing a deportee, under a directive targeting "frivolous" suits, risked deterring robust legal defense in immigration cases. (12 Aug 2025)

15. Federal appeals court allowed the Trump administration to cut billions in USAID foreign aid funding. Upholding executive authority to withhold

congressionally allocated foreign aid shifted power over international assistance from the legislature toward the presidency. (13 Aug 2025)

16. Department of Veterans Affairs Office of Inspector General reported severe nationwide staffing shortages at VA hospitals. An inspector general report documenting widespread VA staffing gaps highlighted systemic strain on a core public service and provided oversight data for policy responses. (13 Aug 2025)

17. Democratic members of Congress were repeatedly blocked from unannounced visits to ICE detention facilities and filed suit against DHS policy. Requiring a week's notice for congressional inspections of detention centers and the resulting lawsuit highlighted executive efforts to limit legislative oversight of immigration enforcement. (13 Aug 2025)

18. California Governor Gavin Newsom publicly warned Trump against manipulating redistricting in Republican-led states and threatened legal countermeasures. A governor's threat to respond legally and with counter-redistricting to perceived federal meddling in state maps underscored inter-governmental conflict over control of representation. (13 Aug 2025; 15 Aug 2025)

19. Federal judge blocked the Trump administration from cutting funds to schools and universities over DEI programs. Enjoining funding cuts tied to diversity programs protected institutional autonomy and academic speech from punitive federal conditions. (14 Aug 2025)

20. Federal court in Louisiana received a lawsuit alleging ICE unlawfully deported U.S.-citizen children and their mothers to Honduras. Litigation over the deportation of citizen children and a child with cancer challenged whether immigration authorities followed due process and respected citizenship rights. (14 Aug 2025)

21. U.S. Court of Appeals lifted a block on the Trump administration's mass firings at the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau. Allowing layoffs of 1,500 CFPB employees to proceed cleared the way for large-scale restructuring of a key consumer watchdog, weakening its institutional capacity. (15 Aug 2025)

22. DeKalb County Superior Court dismissed domestic terrorism charges against a 'Cop City' protester for due process violations. Throwing out terrorism charges after long delays affirmed that protest-related prosecutions must meet constitutional timelines, limiting misuse of severe charges against activists. (15 Aug 2025)

23. Federal grand jury indicted New Orleans Mayor LaToya Cantrell on corruption charges. Charging a sitting mayor with misuse of city resources

and obstruction demonstrated that federal criminal processes can reach local executives accused of self-dealing. (15 Aug 2025)

24. District of Columbia Attorney General sued the Trump administration to block its takeover of the D.C. police department. Challenging federal control of D.C. policing in court asserted the District's right to self-governance and sought judicial limits on emergency-based federalization. (15 Aug 2025)

25. Democratic members of Congress introduced a joint resolution to end federalization of the D.C. police department. A congressional resolution to terminate federal control of D.C. police used legislative tools to contest executive overreach into local law enforcement. (15 Aug 2025)

26. Texas Governor Greg Abbott called consecutive special legislative sessions to pass a Republican-favoring congressional map. Repeatedly convening special sessions to secure a partisan redistricting plan leveraged procedural control to reshape representation in favor of one party. (12 Aug 2025; 14 Aug 2025; 15 Aug 2025)

27. California Governor Gavin Newsom and state officials announced conditional plans for partisan redistricting and a special election to counter Texas map changes. Proposing contingent redistricting and a special election to offset Texas's map maneuvers framed gerrymandering as a tit-for-tat tool in interstate partisan competition. (14 Aug 2025; 15 Aug 2025)

28. Mason, Tennessee town officials approved converting a former prison into a private ICE detention center. Authorizing a private company to run a new immigration detention facility extended the use of for-profit incarceration in federal enforcement, with limited democratic oversight. (13 Aug 2025)

29. U.S. Secret Service and U.S. Army Corps of Engineers altered water levels at an Ohio lake for Vice President JD Vance's boating trip, prompting congressional scrutiny. Adjusting a public reservoir for a vice-presidential outing raised concerns about using federal resources for personal benefit and the adequacy of internal controls. (15 Aug 2025)

30. Congress enacted the ACES Act of 2025. Passage of the ACES Act illustrated ongoing legislative capacity to set national policy through regular lawmaking despite broader institutional strains. (14 Aug 2025)

31. Congress enacted the PRO Veterans Act of 2025 to expand veterans' services and benefits. Creating new statutory support for veterans demonstrated the legislature's role in strengthening social entitlements and directing executive agencies' obligations. (14 Aug 2025)

## Civil Rights and Dissent

1. U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement arrested Trump Burger owner Roland Mehrez Beainy and initiated deportation proceedings. Detaining a long-term resident business owner over visa issues illustrated the administration's strict immigration enforcement approach, regardless of political alignment. (9 Aug 2025)
2. Immigration and Customs Enforcement detained lawful permanent resident Will (Tae Huang) Kim over a 14-year-old marijuana offense. Moving to deport a green card holder for an old minor drug conviction highlighted the severity and retroactive reach of immigration penalties for noncitizens. (10 Aug 2025)
3. Immigration and Customs Enforcement detained DACA recipient and organizer Catalina "Xochitl" Santiago in El Paso. Arresting a DACA recipient and community organizer underscored the precariousness of protections for young immigrants and potential targeting of activists. (10 Aug 2025)
4. Rev. William Barber and allied groups organized Moral Monday protests in Washington, D.C., and Southern cities. Planning coordinated Moral Monday demonstrations continued a tradition of mass protest to pressure officials on civil and economic rights. (10 Aug 2025)
5. Department of Justice and ICE used terrorism and Alien Enemies designations to expel Venezuelans accused of gang ties. Labeling Tren de Aragua a terrorist group and expelling alleged members under the Alien Enemies Act expanded use of national security tools in immigration enforcement. (13 Aug 2025)
6. Department of Justice doubled the bounty on Venezuelan President Nicolás Maduro to \$50 million. Offering a large reward for a foreign head of state escalated U.S. pressure tactics and intertwined criminal pursuit with geopolitical conflict. (13 Aug 2025)
7. Baltimore Police Department arrested former youth pastor Thomas Pinkerton on multiple abuse charges involving teenagers. Charging a religious leader with long-running abuse of teens reflected law enforcement's role in addressing institutional sexual misconduct and protecting minors. (12 Aug 2025)
8. Department of Justice fired DOJ employee Carolyn Feinstein after her spouse launched an app warning of ICE presence. Terminating a DOJ worker linked to an app that alerts communities to ICE activity raised concerns about retaliation against perceived critics of immigration enforcement. (13 Aug 2025)
9. Immigration and Customs Enforcement conducted a Home Depot raid

in Los Angeles that led to a man's death while fleeing. An ICE raid that ended in a fleeing man's death highlighted the human costs of aggressive workplace enforcement and tensions with local sanctuary policies. (15 Aug 2025)

10. U.S. Border Patrol deployed armed agents to Governor Newsom's Los Angeles event at a museum. Sending rifle-carrying agents to a gubernatorial event was perceived as intimidation of state officials, blurring security functions with political signaling. (15 Aug 2025)

11. Governor Gavin Newsom publicly called for resistance to what he described as Trump's assault on democracy. A governor's appeal for collective action against perceived authoritarian drift sought to mobilize civic engagement in defense of democratic norms. (15 Aug 2025)

12. DC Peace Team offered active bystander training for encounters with ICE operations. Training residents to intervene nonviolently during immigration enforcement built community capacity to support vulnerable neighbors and document potential abuses. (15 Aug 2025)

13. Engaged Durhamites for Democracy and allied activists launched a campaign to pressure Avelo Airlines over its ICE transport contract. Targeting an airline's ICE contract used consumer and reputational pressure to contest corporate participation in controversial immigration enforcement. (15 Aug 2025)

14. Moral Monday organizers in North Carolina planned a protest against a Republican health bill using symbolic caskets. Organizing a visually powerful protest against a health bill framed policy choices as life-and-death issues and exercised assembly rights to influence legislators. (15 Aug 2025)

15. Texas Democrats and Representative Gene Wu organized resistance to Trump-backed efforts to rig Texas electoral maps. State legislators' campaign against partisan redistricting sought to protect fair representation and mobilize public opposition to map manipulation. (15 Aug 2025)

16. Protesters in Charlbury, Oxfordshire demonstrated against U.S. Vice President JD Vance's visit. A local protest against the vice president's policies showed cross-border public dissent toward U.S. leaders and their stances on Ukraine and the environment. (13 Aug 2025)

17. Department of Homeland Security and TSA revised an aviation security survey to replace the term "gender" with "sex". Mandating use of "sex" instead of "gender" in a federal survey reflected a policy shift in how the government categorizes identity, with implications for recognition of gender diversity. (14 Aug 2025)

18. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention invited comment on data collection for the Laboratory Response Network. Seeking input on lab

capacity data collection supported preparedness for biological threats, indirectly affecting public health protections for the population. (11 Aug 2025)

19. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention continued sanitation inspections and fees for cruise ships. Maintaining cruise ship sanitation oversight helped prevent disease outbreaks that can disproportionately affect travelers and port communities. (15 Aug 2025)

20. Drug Enforcement Administration temporarily placed two synthetic opioids into Schedule I. Emergency scheduling of potent synthetic opioids tightened controls to address overdose risks, affecting both public health and criminal penalties. (15 Aug 2025)

21. Urban crime analysts examined links between crime rates, urban density, and support for transit-oriented development. Analysis showing low homicide rates in dense New York versus higher rates elsewhere informed debates on safety, urban form, and public willingness to support denser cities. (15 Aug 2025)

## Economic Structure

1. Nvidia, AMD, and Trump administration officials agreed to share 15% of China-related chip revenues with the U.S. government in exchange for export licenses. Striking a bespoke revenue-sharing deal for export permissions blurred lines between taxation, regulation, and negotiation, enhancing executive leverage over major firms outside normal legislative processes. (10 Aug 2025)

2. Department of Veterans Affairs leadership and Congress pursued VA workforce reductions and privatization alongside legislation expanding private care access. Shrinking VA staffing while advancing laws to route veterans to private providers shifted a core public good toward market delivery and weakened in-house capacity. (11 Aug 2025; 13 Aug 2025)

3. President Donald Trump and Congress expanded work requirements for SNAP benefits to additional vulnerable groups. Imposing stricter work rules on food assistance for parents, older adults, veterans, and homeless people tied basic subsistence more tightly to labor market participation, likely reducing coverage. (12 Aug 2025)

4. Greg Ip and economic analysts described U.S. economic policy under Trump as moving toward state capitalism. Analysis that the administration was exerting direct control over key firms and investments highlighted a trend toward politically steered markets and blurred public-private boundaries. (12 Aug 2025)

5. Economic Innovation Group researchers reported that AI exposure had

not yet measurably displaced U.S. jobs. Evidence that AI had not yet caused broad job loss informed debates over automation, labor policy, and the urgency of economic protections. (12 Aug 2025)

6. Gerard DiPippo and trade analysts challenged claims that China was widely using third countries to evade U.S. tariffs. Findings that Southeast Asia exports reflected local production rather than Chinese transshipment clarified trade patterns relevant to tariff and decoupling policy. (12 Aug 2025)

7. Blattman, Gehlbach, and Yu published research showing personalist dictatorships have lower economic growth than other regimes. Research linking concentrated personal rule to weaker growth underscored economic risks of governance models that centralize power in a single leader. (12 Aug 2025)

8. Drug Enforcement Administration and multiple pharmaceutical firms processed numerous applications to import or manufacture controlled substances for research and bulk production. DEA notices on controlled substance registrations illustrated ongoing regulatory gatekeeping over drug research and production, balancing scientific access with abuse concerns. (11 Aug 2025; 12 Aug 2025; 15 Aug 2025)

9. Federal Communications Commission sought public comment on multiple information collection requirements affecting telecom and broadcasting. FCC paperwork and data-collection notices shaped how telecom and broadcasters report operations, influencing regulatory oversight and market transparency. (11 Aug 2025; 12 Aug 2025; 13 Aug 2025; 14 Aug 2025)

10. Occupational Safety and Health Administration extended approval for its conflict-of-interest disclosure form and invited comments. Maintaining conflict-of-interest disclosure requirements for peer reviewers aimed to preserve integrity in workplace safety rulemaking while monitoring administrative burdens. (11 Aug 2025)

11. Environmental Protection Agency processed multiple state implementation plan revisions and permit objections related to air quality and mine remediation. EPA approvals and objections on state air plans and industrial permits demonstrated federal oversight of environmental standards that affect industry costs and community health. (13 Aug 2025; 14 Aug 2025)

12. Federal Communications Commission amended TV and radio channel allotments in several markets. Adjusting broadcast channel assignments in Oregon, Nevada, Texas, and Oregon markets affected local media infrastructure and spectrum use. (13 Aug 2025; 14 Aug 2025)

13. U.S. Census Bureau sought comment on extending the Monthly Wholesale Trade Survey. Continuing wholesale trade data collection

supported key economic indicators used by policymakers and analysts to track business activity. (14 Aug 2025)

14. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention continued cruise ship sanitation inspection fees for the next fiscal year. Maintaining inspection fees for cruise ships sustained a user-funded model for federal oversight of onboard sanitation and disease prevention. (15 Aug 2025)

15. Environmental Protection Agency set a pesticide residue tolerance for mandipropamid on papaya. Establishing a pesticide tolerance level governed how much chemical residue is legally allowed on imported or domestic papaya, balancing agricultural practices with food safety. (15 Aug 2025)

16. Environmental Protection Agency extended deadlines and comment periods for certain industrial emission standards. Pushing back compliance and comment deadlines for emission rules gave affected industries more time to adapt and influence final standards. (15 Aug 2025)

17. Environmental Protection Agency issued findings that certain new chemicals or uses were not likely to present unreasonable risk. TSCA determinations that new chemicals posed low risk allowed manufacturers to proceed, shaping the pace of chemical innovation and regulatory scrutiny. (15 Aug 2025)

18. Food and Drug Administration announced public meetings and workshops on biosimilar regulatory science and interchangeability. FDA's biosimilar meetings sought stakeholder input on scientific and regulatory frameworks that will influence competition and pricing in biologic drugs. (15 Aug 2025)

19. Food and Drug Administration revoked emergency use authorization for a COVID-19 diagnostic device at the manufacturer's request. Ending EUA for a discontinued COVID-19 test reflected ongoing adjustment of emergency-era medical authorizations to current market and public health conditions. (15 Aug 2025)

20. Urban policy analysts highlighted regulatory and political barriers to building subways and dense housing in U.S. cities. Analyses of NIMBYism, zoning, and construction methods showed how local rules and opposition constrain transit and housing supply, shaping urban economic geography. (15 Aug 2025)

## Information, Memory, and Manipulation

i. Russian President Vladimir Putin awarded the Order of Lenin to the mother of an American who died fighting for Russia in Ukraine. Honoring an American's mother for her son's service to Russia served as symbolic propa-

ganda aimed at undermining U.S. narratives about loyalty and the Ukraine war. (9 Aug 2025)

2. Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth reposted a video by Christian nationalist pastors opposing women's voting rights. Amplifying a message against women's suffrage from a senior defense official normalized fringe ideas about rolling back voting rights in mainstream discourse. (10 Aug 2025; 11 Aug 2025)

3. Campante et al. published a study on AI-generated misinformation and news consumption. Research showing that exposure to AI-generated misinformation can increase concern and engagement with trustworthy news illuminated complex effects of synthetic media on information ecosystems. (12 Aug 2025)

4. Trump White House hosted right-wing podcaster Benny Johnson at a press briefing. Inviting a conspiracy-prone commentator with ties to Russian-linked media into official briefings signaled state validation of fringe outlets and narratives. (12 Aug 2025)

5. Noah Smith and urban commentators argued that NIMBYism and regulatory barriers hinder dense, transit-rich cities in the U.S. Commentary on zoning and transit politics highlighted how local narratives and participation rules shape public understanding of urban development choices. (15 Aug 2025)

6. Indivisible launched a Truth Brigade campaign to counter disinformation. Organizing volunteers to actively rebut false narratives aimed to strengthen grassroots capacity to defend factual discourse in the public sphere. (15 Aug 2025)

7. The Trump Administration and Smithsonian leadership moved to review Smithsonian exhibitions to emphasize American exceptionalism and avoid "divisive" narratives. Plans to align museum content with a celebratory national story risked sidelining histories of injustice and dissent in federally supported cultural institutions. (13 Aug 2025)

8. Secretary of Defense Pete Hegseth reinstalled a Confederate memorial at Arlington National Cemetery. Restoring a monument that romanticizes the Confederacy used official commemoration to elevate a contested version of U.S. history that downplays slavery's brutality. (11 Aug 2025)

9. Food and Drug Administration and LumiraDx publicly documented revocation of a COVID-19 diagnostic EUA at the manufacturer's request. Publishing details of an EUA revocation contributed to transparency about how pandemic-era medical authorizations are wound down. (15 Aug 2025)

10. Environmental Protection Agency issued a notice of availability for multiple environmental impact statements and extended comment periods. Making environmental impact statements available and extending comment

windows supported public participation and record-building in major project decisions. (15 Aug 2025)

11. Transportation Security Administration revised its aviation security customer survey terminology from “gender” to “sex” under an executive order. Changing official survey language under presidential direction reflected how executive policy can reshape how federal data categorize identity, with downstream effects on statistics and discourse. (14 Aug 2025)

12. Bureau of Labor Statistics and U.S. statistical agencies underwent leadership changes and politicized staffing under Trump. Replacing neutral statisticians with loyalists at BLS and other agencies threatened the objectivity of economic data that inform voters and policymakers. (11 Aug 2025; 13 Aug 2025)



## **CHAPTER 5**

# **WEEK 31 (16 AUG 2025 – 22 AUG 2025): EMERGENCY AS GOVERNING METHOD**

*In Washington, elections, immigration, and memory, the administration treated emergency powers and loyal law as routine tools of rule, not rare exceptions.*

This was a rapid week of authoritarian consolidation, with various branches and levels of government working together to centralize power around the executive and its ideological agenda. The strongest pressures targeted rule-of-law institutions, civil-military boundaries, and election integrity. Trump's broad pardons for January 6 offenders, politicized prosecutions, and unlawful appointments, along with the federalization and arming of D.C. police and National Guard, show law enforcement and security agencies being redirected to protect the regime and punish opponents. At the same time, aggressive gerrymandering in Texas and retaliatory mid-decade redistricting in California, along with efforts to eliminate mail-in voting and tighten voter registration, aim to steer elections toward controlled competition. Immigration and visa policies have become tools for ideological sorting and intimidation, while public health and scientific agencies were either attacked or co-opted to align data and policies with political narratives. There were areas of resistance—federal courts checking some excesses, civil servants and state officials suing or protesting—but these mainly served as defensive measures against a rapidly expanding system of executive dominance and militarized domestic governance.

## Power and Authority

1. President Trump pardoned individuals convicted or charged for January 6 Capitol offenses. By pardoning roughly 1,500 people involved in the January 6 attack, the president removed legal consequences for violence against Congress, weakening deterrence for future assaults on the transfer of power and signaling impunity for loyalists. (16 Aug 2025; 18 Aug 2025)

2. President Trump announced plans for an executive order to eliminate mail-in voting and voting machines. Trump's plan to ban mail-in ballots and many voting machines by executive order would override state control of elections, centralize power in the presidency, and restrict voting methods long used to broaden participation. (18 Aug 2025; 19 Aug 2025)

3. President Trump called on state legislatures to end mail-in voting and use only paper ballots. Trump's public demand that state legislatures abolish mail-in voting and change ballot methods to benefit his party pressures state lawmakers to alter election rules for partisan gain rather than neutral administration. (22 Aug 2025)

4. President Trump declared a public safety emergency and federalized the Washington, D.C., police department. By declaring an emergency despite falling crime and seizing control of D.C.'s police, Trump concentrated policing power in the executive branch and weakened local self-governance in the nation's capital. (18 Aug 2025; 20 Aug 2025; 21 Aug 2025)

5. President Trump deployed National Guard troops and federal agents to Washington, D.C. Trump's deployment of hundreds of National Guard troops and federal agents into D.C. for routine crime control blurred civil-military boundaries and normalized military-style presence in civilian governance. (16 Aug 2025; 18 Aug 2025; 20 Aug 2025; 21 Aug 2025; 22 Aug 2025)

6. President Trump deployed Marines and federalized California National Guard forces to Los Angeles. Sending Marines and federalized Guard troops to Los Angeles to respond to protests over immigration raids used military force in domestic law enforcement, raising concerns about executive overreach and civil liberties. (17 Aug 2025; 18 Aug 2025)

7. President Trump ordered the removal of homeless people from Washington, D.C., streets under threat of fines or jail. Trump's directive to clear homeless people from D.C. streets under threat of punishment used coercive state power to manage poverty as a public-order issue rather than through social support, affecting vulnerable residents' security. (16 Aug 2025)

8. President Trump signed a directive authorizing military action against Latin American drug cartels designated as terrorists. Authorizing military operations against cartels labeled as foreign terrorist organizations

expanded presidential war-making into law-enforcement domains, with potential implications for international law and congressional oversight. (22 Aug 2025)

9. President Trump called for the release of convicted former election clerk Tina Peters and threatened harsh measures. Trump's demand to free a convicted election official and threat of unspecified harsh measures challenged judicial authority and signaled willingness to intervene politically in individual criminal cases tied to election security. (21 Aug 2025)

10. President Trump joked about canceling the 2028 elections if the U.S. were at war. By suggesting elections could be canceled during wartime, Trump normalized rhetoric that treats regular transfers of power as optional, undermining public expectations of uninterrupted electoral cycles. (18 Aug 2025)

11. President Trump fired the Bureau of Labor Statistics commissioner after criticizing an unfavorable jobs report. Removing the BLS commissioner over a report that contradicted Trump's claims signaled that independent economic data producers risk dismissal for inconvenient findings, pressuring agencies to align statistics with political narratives. (18 Aug 2025)

12. President Trump nominated E.J. Antoni, a January 6 participant and election denier, to lead the Bureau of Labor Statistics. Nominating a January 6 participant who promoted election conspiracies to head BLS further politicized a key statistical agency, risking manipulation of labor data for partisan messaging. (18 Aug 2025)

13. President Trump called for Federal Reserve Governor Lisa Cook's resignation and threatened to fire her. Trump's public push to oust Fed Governor Lisa Cook over contested allegations threatened the central bank's independence and suggested monetary policymakers could be removed for political or personal reasons. (20 Aug 2025; 21 Aug 2025)

14. President Trump announced he would patrol Washington, D.C., with National Guard and police. Trump's plan to personally patrol with armed forces in D.C. blurred lines between political leadership and operational policing, reinforcing a personalized, militarized image of executive authority. (20 Aug 2025)

15. President Trump claimed to have ended ten wars in 2025 despite contrary statements from Russia. Trump's exaggerated claims about ending multiple wars, contradicted by Russian officials, contributed to confusion about U.S. foreign policy and accountability for conflict outcomes. (20 Aug 2025)

16. President Trump supported a plan for Ukraine to cede the Donbas region to Russia. Backing territorial concessions by Ukraine to Russia aligned

U.S. presidential preferences with an aggressor's aims, potentially weakening norms against conquest and undermining democratic allies. (16 Aug 2025)

17. President Trump met with President Putin in Alaska and declined to impose further sanctions on Russia. Trump's summit with Putin, followed by a decision against new sanctions despite ongoing aggression, signaled a softer stance toward Russia that could weaken leverage in defending democratic partners. (17 Aug 2025)

18. President Trump proposed arranging a meeting between Presidents Putin and Zelensky to discuss a peace deal. Trump's initiative to broker a Putin–Zelensky meeting positioned him as a central mediator in the Ukraine war, raising concerns among allies about whose interests such talks would prioritize. (17 Aug 2025)

19. President Trump made controversial statements blaming Ukraine for the war and seeking credit for peace. By suggesting Ukraine started the war and seeking personal credit for peace, Trump distorted responsibility for aggression and personalized U.S. policy toward a major conflict. (18 Aug 2025)

20. President Trump met with President Zelensky and European leaders amid concerns over his alignment with Russia. Trump's meeting with Zelensky and European leaders, following his Putin summit, highlighted allied unease that U.S. policy might shift away from defending Ukraine's territorial integrity. (18 Aug 2025; 19 Aug 2025)

21. President Trump announced a military-style crackdown on crime in Washington, D.C., with possible expansion to other cities. Trump's talk of a broader military takeover of D.C. and potentially other cities framed domestic crime as a justification for sustained military involvement in local governance. (21 Aug 2025)

22. President Trump signed an executive order to improve access to mental health treatment during public safety efforts. An executive order to ease access to mental health treatment for people in crisis tied social services to a broader public safety agenda, potentially improving care but also linking treatment to coercive interventions. (21 Aug 2025)

23. President Trump issued an executive order launching the "America by Design" initiative to modernize federal services. Creating a National Design Studio and Chief Design Officer to improve federal service design aimed to make government interfaces more usable, potentially enhancing public access and trust in institutions. (21 Aug 2025)

24. President Trump ordered the White House to launch an official TikTok account while pausing a congressionally mandated ban. By launching a White House TikTok account while delaying a statutory ban, Trump leveraged a foreign-owned platform for political communication

despite prior national security concerns and legislative direction. (20 Aug 2025)

25. President Trump signed a tax bill restructuring federal student loan borrowing and repayment options. The new tax law capping federal student borrowing and ending some graduate loan programs will constrain access to higher education, especially for lower-income and professional students, deepening financial barriers to advanced study. (21 Aug 2025)

26. President Trump signed a spending megabill repealing many Biden-era green energy incentives. Repealing green energy incentives through a large spending bill shifted federal support away from renewables toward fossil fuels, contributing to higher electricity costs and slowing the clean energy transition. (19 Aug 2025)

27. President Trump signed an executive order canceling union contracts for hundreds of thousands of federal workers. Canceling collective bargaining agreements for about 400,000 federal employees sharply reduced organized labor's leverage in the civil service, weakening worker protections and independent voice inside government. (22 Aug 2025)

28. President Trump directed the State Department to impose sanctions on International Criminal Court officials. Sanctioning ICC judges and prosecutors investigating U.S. and Israeli nationals used U.S. power to punish international judicial actors, undermining global accountability mechanisms for war crimes. (20 Aug 2025)

29. President Trump publicly criticized Smithsonian museums for focusing on slavery and ordered legal review of exhibits. Trump's attacks on Smithsonian exhibits about slavery and his directive to review them signaled executive pressure on national museums to soften or revise narratives about historical injustice. (19 Aug 2025; 21 Aug 2025)

30. President Trump called for the firing of Federal Reserve Governor Lisa Cook amid a DOJ investigation. Trump's threat to remove a sitting Fed governor while DOJ investigated her alleged mortgage fraud risked turning law enforcement and central banking into tools for reshaping independent economic governance. (21 Aug 2025)

31. President Trump announced a plan to federalize election control and treat states as agents of the federal government. Trump's proposal to centralize election administration under federal executive authority, eliminating mail-in ballots and machines, would upend the constitutional role of states and concentrate control over voting in the presidency. (17 Aug 2025)

## Institutions and Governance

1. Florida Supreme Court upheld Governor DeSantis's redistricting plan that reduced Black voting power. By approving a map that diluted Black voters' influence despite a state ban on partisan and racial gerrymandering, Florida's high court weakened constitutional protections for fair representation. (16 Aug 2025)

2. Texas Judge Megan Fahey issued a restraining order blocking Beto O'Rourke's group from sending funds to out-of-state Democrats. Restricting a political group's ability to support allies outside Texas limited cross-state organizing and fundraising, affecting opposition capacity during a high-stakes redistricting fight. (17 Aug 2025)

3. Justice Department under Attorney General Pam Bondi impaneled a grand jury to investigate alleged Obama-era treason in 2016. Launching a grand jury into baseless claims that Obama officials conspired in 2016 used prosecutorial tools to pursue political narratives, eroding norms of evidence-based investigations. (18 Aug 2025)

4. Newsmax settled Dominion Voting Systems' defamation lawsuit for \$67 million. Newsmax's multimillion-dollar settlement over false claims about Dominion's voting machines underscored legal consequences for election disinformation while stopping short of a full public trial. (18 Aug 2025; 19 Aug 2025)

5. U.S. District Judge Kathleen Williams issued orders restricting and then mandating closure of Florida's "Alligator Alcatraz" immigration jail. Judge Williams first halted expansion and then ordered closure of a controversial immigration jail for environmental violations and rights concerns, demonstrating judicial checks on abusive detention infrastructure. (18 Aug 2025; 21 Aug 2025; 22 Aug 2025)

6. Federal judge in Illinois dismissed the Trump administration's challenge to the Illinois Right to Privacy in the Workplace Act. Upholding Illinois' workplace privacy law against a federal challenge preserved state authority to protect workers' data in the face of immigration-related preemption claims. (19 Aug 2025)

7. Coalition of Democratic-led states and D.C. sued the Justice Department over efforts to tie crime-victim funds to immigration cooperation. States challenged a DOJ policy that threatened to withhold Victims of Crime Act funds from jurisdictions resisting immigration crackdowns, contesting federal use of funding to coerce local policy. (18 Aug 2025)

8. Federal judge dismissed part of a lawsuit over conditions at the "Alligator Alcatraz" detention facility and changed venue for other claims.

Partially dismissing detainees' constitutional claims while moving others to a different court reshaped the legal terrain for challenging conditions at a high-profile immigration jail. (18 Aug 2025)

9. Federal judge in New York rejected the Trump administration's request to unseal Epstein grand jury materials. By keeping Epstein grand jury transcripts sealed to protect victims and avoid diversionary disclosures, the court resisted political pressure to selectively expose sensitive records. (20 Aug 2025)

10. U.S. District Judge Fred Biery blocked a Texas law requiring Ten Commandments displays in public school classrooms. Issuing a temporary injunction against mandatory Ten Commandments displays upheld church-state separation and limited state efforts to impose religious messages in public schools. (20 Aug 2025)

11. Federal Judge Matthew Brann ruled that Alina Habba was unlawfully serving as U.S. Attorney for New Jersey. Finding that Trump's former lawyer Alina Habba held the U.S. Attorney post without lawful authority underscored the requirement for proper appointments and Senate confirmation in key prosecutorial roles. (20 Aug 2025; 21 Aug 2025)

12. Federal appeals court allowed the Trump administration to proceed with ending Temporary Protected Status for some immigrants. Permitting TPS termination for over 60,000 immigrants from several countries, pending litigation, exposed long-settled residents to potential deportation and highlighted judicial deference to restrictive immigration policy. (20 Aug 2025)

13. Federal judge ruled that the State Department cannot deny visas solely based on Trump's travel ban. Limiting the State Department's ability to deny visas under a broad travel ban for 19 countries narrowed executive discretion and protected some applicants from blanket exclusion. (21 Aug 2025)

14. New York appeals court overturned a \$500 million civil fraud penalty against Donald Trump as excessive. Reducing Trump's financial liability while affirming underlying fraud findings eased the personal consequences of misconduct for a former president, raising questions about proportional accountability for powerful figures. (21 Aug 2025)

15. Passengers filed class action lawsuits against Delta and United Airlines over windowless seats. Class actions challenging airlines' marketing of windowless seats as standard seating raised consumer protection and transparency issues in a highly concentrated industry. (21 Aug 2025)

16. Department of Justice began investigating Federal Reserve Governor Lisa Cook for alleged mortgage fraud. A DOJ probe into a sitting Fed governor's mortgage filings, following a politically charged referral, risked entangling central bank governance in partisan legal battles. (21 Aug 2025)

17. Supreme Court of the United States partially granted a stay in NIH v. American Public Health Association regarding grant guidance. The Court's split decision to pause restoration of certain NIH grants while leaving other vacated directives in place affected how federal research funding rules are applied during ongoing litigation. (21 Aug 2025)

18. Federal judge in Tennessee ordered the release of Kilmar Ábrego García from custody after wrongful deportation. Releasing Ábrego García after his mistaken deportation and return to the U.S. illustrated judicial correction of executive immigration errors and the role of courts in restoring due process. (22 Aug 2025)

19. Wisconsin youth plaintiffs filed a constitutional lawsuit challenging state pro-fossil fuel electricity laws. Young activists' suit arguing that Wisconsin laws favoring fossil fuels violate their constitutional rights sought to use courts to force climate-conscious energy regulation. (22 Aug 2025)

20. Department of Justice released redacted transcripts of Ghislaine Maxwell interviews about Jeffrey Epstein's associations. Publishing redacted Maxwell interview transcripts about Epstein's ties to prominent figures provided limited transparency while raising concerns about selective disclosure in a politically sensitive case. (22 Aug 2025)

21. House Oversight Committee began receiving and reviewing Jeffrey Epstein documents from the DOJ. The committee's phased receipt and planned release of Epstein-related records aimed to balance transparency with victim protection, while DOJ's incremental approach drew criticism for possible stonewalling. (18 Aug 2025; 21 Aug 2025; 22 Aug 2025)

22. Texas Republicans in the state legislature used state troopers and surveillance protocols to compel Democratic members' attendance for redistricting votes. Assigning troopers to monitor Democratic lawmakers and requiring signed commitments to attend redistricting votes turned law enforcement into a tool for enforcing partisan legislative control. (20 Aug 2025; 21 Aug 2025)

23. Texas House Democrats returned from a quorum-denying walkout to build a legal case against a GOP redistricting map. Democrats' return to the Texas legislature after a walkout signaled a shift from procedural obstruction to legal challenge against a map they argue is racially discriminatory. (18 Aug 2025; 19 Aug 2025)

24. Texas House of Representatives approved a mid-decade congressional redistricting map favoring Republicans. Passing a map expected to net Republicans five additional U.S. House seats entrenched partisan advantage and diluted the voting power of communities of color in Texas. (20 Aug 2025; 22 Aug 2025)

25. California Governor Gavin Newsom and legislature enacted mid-decade redistricting measures and called a special election on new congressional maps. California's passage of temporary redistricting bills and a November special election to add Democratic-leaning seats responded to Texas's gerrymander, escalating partisan map wars and sidelining the independent commission. (19 Aug 2025; 21 Aug 2025; 22 Aug 2025)
26. California Governor Gavin Newsom filed a FOIA request seeking records on border patrol agents' presence at his redistricting event. Newsom's FOIA request aimed to uncover whether federal border agents were deployed to his event as political intimidation, testing transparency and oversight over federal law enforcement. (18 Aug 2025)
27. House Oversight Committee pressed DOJ over delays in releasing Epstein files and prepared for public disclosure. Lawmakers criticized DOJ's incremental release of Epstein documents as a potential cover-up while planning bipartisan review and eventual publication, highlighting tensions over transparency in elite abuse cases. (18 Aug 2025; 21 Aug 2025)
28. Senator Adam Schiff requested FCC details on whether Trump sought programming commitments in a media merger. Schiff's inquiry into the Paramount–Skydance merger probed whether merger approval was conditioned on favorable coverage, raising concerns about political influence over media markets and regulators. (18 Aug 2025)
29. Texas Representative Nicole Collier filed a lawsuit challenging her detention and surveillance by the Texas House majority. Collier's suit against the legislature's use of troopers and confinement to force her attendance contested the legality of coercive tactics used to secure a redistricting quorum. (19 Aug 2025)
30. Texas Democrats in the House tore up compliance statements agreeing to police escorts for redistricting votes. By publicly rejecting written commitments to accept police monitoring, Texas Democrats protested what they saw as authoritarian enforcement of attendance for a partisan map vote. (20 Aug 2025)
31. Election Assistance Commission received a petition to require documentary proof of citizenship for federal voter registration. The EAC's consideration of a petition to add strict citizenship documentation to the national mail registration form could raise barriers for eligible voters lacking ready access to passports or Real ID licenses. (21 Aug 2025)
32. North Carolina legislature advanced HB 958 to require full Social Security numbers on voter registration forms. Requiring full Social Security numbers for voter registration would increase privacy risks and could deter

sign-ups, especially among marginalized communities wary of data misuse. (20 Aug 2025)

33. North Carolina legislature considered HB 781 to criminalize unauthorized camping and sleeping. A bill to criminalize homelessness through camping bans would shift social welfare issues into the criminal system, exposing unhoused people to arrest rather than services. (20 Aug 2025)

34. Election Assistance Commission sought public comment on a petition to tighten federal voter registration proof-of-citizenship rules. By opening public comment on stricter proof-of-citizenship requirements, the EAC initiated a process that could reshape access to federal voter registration nationwide. (21 Aug 2025)

35. Federal courts and parole boards in California held and decided parole hearings for Erik and Lyle Menendez, denying release. The Menendez brothers' parole proceedings, culminating in denial for Erik, illustrated how high-profile life sentences are revisited under evolving standards while still facing prosecutorial opposition. (21 Aug 2025)

36. Iowa voters elected Democrat Catelin Drey in a special state senate election, ending a GOP supermajority. Flipping an Iowa state senate seat from Republican to Democrat broke the GOP supermajority, restoring the minority's ability to block gubernatorial appointments and altering state power balances. (19 Aug 2025)

37. America First Legal Foundation petitioned the EAC to amend voter registration rules to require documentary proof of citizenship. The petition from a conservative legal group sought to tighten federal registration rules in ways that could disproportionately burden naturalized citizens and low-income voters. (21 Aug 2025)

38. Federal agencies and commissions issued numerous technical rules and guidance on chemicals, medical devices, communications, and environmental plans. Routine EPA, FDA, FCC, CDC, Census, GSA, OSHA, DEA, and EAC actions updated regulatory standards, data collections, and safety rules, shaping the administrative framework that underpins public health, environment, and markets. (19 Aug 2025; 20 Aug 2025; 21 Aug 2025; 22 Aug 2025)

## Civil Rights and Dissent

1. U.S. State Department halted visitor visas for children and other individuals from Gaza seeking medical care in the U.S. Stopping medical visas for Gazan children and other visitors, following pressure from a far-right influencer, curtailed humanitarian access and tied life-saving care to politicized security claims. (16 Aug 2025; 18 Aug 2025)

2. Florida Governor Ron DeSantis announced construction of a new federal immigration jail at a closed prison site. Expanding detention capacity at a new "deportation depot" in Florida deepened reliance on incarceration in immigration enforcement, affecting thousands of noncitizens' liberty. (18 Aug 2025)
3. The Trump Administration implemented multiple restrictive policies targeting international students and pro-Palestinian activists. Visa delays, status revocations, expanded social media screening, arrests of student activists, and plans to revoke some Chinese students' visas collectively chilled academic freedom and international exchange. (18 Aug 2025)
4. ACLU and federal courts litigated abuses and environmental harms at Florida's "Alligator Alcatraz" immigration detention center. ACLU lawsuits and resulting court orders over coercive removal practices and harsh conditions at a Florida detention center highlighted systemic rights violations in immigration custody. (18 Aug 2025)
5. ICE and Marriott-affiliated hotels used Sheraton hotels in Louisiana to detain immigrants despite corporate pledges. Detaining immigrants in hotels contrary to Marriott's stated policy blurred lines between hospitality and incarceration, raising concerns about private complicity in opaque detention practices. (19 Aug 2025; 21 Aug 2025)
6. ICE conducted a surprise raid at a New Jersey warehouse detaining dozens of immigrant workers. A large workplace raid in Edison, New Jersey, with workers led away in zip ties, disrupted families and communities and reinforced fear among immigrant laborers. (21 Aug 2025)
7. ICE agents detained 18-year-old Benjamin Marcelo Guerrero-Cruz in Los Angeles using masked officers and an unmarked vehicle. The masked, unmarked-vehicle arrest of a newly adult immigrant in a residential neighborhood resembled a kidnapping to witnesses, intensifying community fear of immigration enforcement. (20 Aug 2025)
8. The Trump Administration expanded continuous vetting and social media monitoring for all 55 million U.S. visa holders and many applicants. Continuous and social media-based vetting of tens of millions of visa holders and applicants for "anti-American" activity vastly expanded surveillance of noncitizens and blurred security screening with ideological policing. (21 Aug 2025)
9. U.S. State Department revoked over 6,000 international student visas citing alleged crimes and terrorism support without detailed evidence. Mass revocation of student visas on vague claims of crime and terrorism disrupted education and signaled that foreign students' status could be revoked en masse without transparent standards. (19 Aug 2025; 21 Aug 2025)

10. U.S. State Department reviewed over 55 million visa holders for violations that could trigger deportation or denial of entry. A sweeping review of all visa holders for overstays, crimes, or perceived threats turned immigration status into a constant probationary condition, heightening insecurity for millions. (21 Aug 2025)

11. Ugandan government and Trump administration reached a temporary agreement for Uganda to accept third-country deportees from the U.S. A deal to send some deportees to Uganda as a third country externalized U.S. immigration enforcement and raised concerns about rights protections after removal. (21 Aug 2025)

12. DHS Secretary Kristi Noem advocated for ICE to acquire its own fleet of deportation airplanes. Noem's push for ICE-owned aircraft to double deportations reflected a policy choice to scale up removals as a central tool of immigration control. (20 Aug 2025)

13. DHS Secretary Kristi Noem oversaw aggressive masked raids and unmarked-vehicle operations that drew congressional scrutiny. Reports of masked agents and unmarked vehicles in immigration raids prompted lawmakers to question whether DHS tactics were designed to terrorize immigrant communities and evade accountability. (19 Aug 2025)

14. ICE and CBP stayed in Los Angeles hotels targeted by protests, prompting a military "hotels to avoid" list. Protests against hotels hosting ICE and CBP agents led the military to warn personnel away from certain locations, illustrating how civil resistance can disrupt enforcement logistics. (21 Aug 2025)

15. ACLU filed a federal petition challenging ICE's detention of journalist Mario Guevara as retaliatory. The ACLU argued that ICE's continued detention of a journalist who covered raids was meant to silence critical reporting, raising serious First Amendment and due process concerns. (21 Aug 2025)

16. The Trump Administration expanded social media vetting by USCIS to deny immigration benefits for perceived "anti-American" activity. USCIS's review of applicants' online speech for ideological content risked punishing lawful expression and importing political litmus tests into immigration adjudications. (21 Aug 2025)

17. The Trump Administration moved to end Temporary Protected Status for tens of thousands of immigrants from several countries. Advancing TPS terminations for Nicaraguan, Honduran, and Nepali nationals threatened to uproot long-settled communities and narrowed humanitarian protections in immigration law. (20 Aug 2025)

18. The Trump Administration rescinded Education Department guidance requiring support for English learners. Rolling back federal expecta-

tions that schools provide structured support to English learners jeopardized equitable access to education for about 5 million children. (20 Aug 2025)

19. ICE conducted increased raids in Monterey County that depressed school attendance among immigrant families. Heightened ICE activity in California led families to keep children home from school, undermining the right to education and exacerbating vulnerabilities among homeless and undocumented students. (18 Aug 2025)

20. Texas House leadership locked Representative Nicole Collier in the chamber and threatened her with surveillance for redistricting votes. Confining a lawmaker and subjecting her to trooper monitoring to force participation in a partisan map vote used coercion against an elected representative, chilling legislative dissent. (18 Aug 2025; 19 Aug 2025; 20 Aug 2025; 21 Aug 2025)

21. North Carolina legislature advanced HB 781 to criminalize homelessness through camping bans. Criminalizing unauthorized camping would expose unhoused people to arrest and fines, treating poverty as a criminal matter rather than a social policy issue. (20 Aug 2025)

22. City of Grants Pass, Oregon settled a lawsuit by agreeing to provide accessible camping spaces and services for unhoused people. After litigation over discriminatory camping rules, Grants Pass committed to designated spaces and basic services for unhoused residents, partially mitigating the impact of a Supreme Court ruling allowing camping bans. (20 Aug 2025)

23. Rev. William Barber and allied activists organized Moral Monday protests against a congressional funding bill backing Trump's agenda. Regional Moral Monday protests mobilized civil society against a federal funding bill seen as underwriting policies harmful to democracy and social justice. (20 Aug 2025)

24. Over 750 HHS and federal health workers sent letters accusing Health Secretary Robert F. Kennedy Jr. of fueling harassment and violence. Health workers warned that Kennedy's anti-vaccine rhetoric and actions had contributed to threats and a deadly attack on CDC staff, urging him to stop spreading misinformation that endangers public servants. (20 Aug 2025)

25. Health Secretary Robert F. Kennedy Jr. terminated 22 mRNA vaccine research projects and accused pediatricians of "pay-to-play" with pharma. Canceling major mRNA research funding and attacking the American Academy of Pediatrics undermined evidence-based public health and stigmatized professional guidance on childhood vaccination. (18 Aug 2025; 19 Aug 2025)

26. EPA leadership aligned with Trump moved to rescind the 2009 endangerment finding for greenhouse gases. Rolling back the foundational finding

that greenhouse gases endanger public health would weaken the legal basis for climate regulation, affecting long-term environmental and health protections. (18 Aug 2025)

27. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and partners announced a convening to accelerate hepatitis C diagnosis and treatment. A CDC-led meeting on faster HCV diagnosis and treatment aimed to improve access to care and reduce disease burden, strengthening public health infrastructure. (20 Aug 2025)

28. FDA and DEA processed multiple controlled-substance manufacturing and import applications for research and clinical use. Regulatory approvals and applications for opioids, cannabis products, and psychedelics for research balanced public health risks with scientific and therapeutic development. (21 Aug 2025)

## Economic Structure

1. The Trump Administration imposed a 50% tariff on Brazilian coffee imports and raised tariffs on other coffee-producing countries. Steep tariffs on Brazilian and other coffee imports increased costs for U.S. businesses and consumers while reshaping trade advantages among producer countries, using tariff power to reorder market relationships. (16 Aug 2025)

2. Treasury Department rewrote standards for renewable energy projects to qualify for tax credits. Tightening eligibility for renewable energy tax credits threatened many clean energy projects' viability, favoring incumbent fossil fuel interests and contributing to higher electricity prices. (19 Aug 2025)

3. U.S. government and Intel pursued converting Chips Act funding into a non-voting equity stake in Intel. Negotiating an equity stake in Intel in exchange for subsidies marked a shift toward direct state ownership in a key industry, raising questions about corporate governance and public risk-sharing. (19 Aug 2025)

4. Congress and President Trump enacted a budget reconciliation bill projected to trigger large Medicare and Medicaid cuts. A deficit-increasing reconciliation bill is expected to force nearly \$500 billion in Medicare cuts and almost \$1 trillion from Medicaid, shrinking core social safety nets for seniors and low-income people. (19 Aug 2025)

5. USCIS issued a new policy memo tightening citizenship evaluations based on subjective moral character. Requiring more subjective assessments of "good moral character" in naturalization decisions increased discretion and potential bias in granting citizenship, especially for marginalized applicants. (19 Aug 2025)

6. The Trump Administration proposed a rule to bar some workers from Public Service Loan Forgiveness based on employers' conduct. Linking access to student loan forgiveness to whether employers allegedly undermine national security or American values introduced ideological criteria into a key economic relief program. (20 Aug 2025)

7. ICE planned to spend over \$2.4 million on customized SUVs and militarized vehicle wraps without open bidding. ICE's no-bid contracts for branded enforcement vehicles highlighted opaque spending and the use of public funds to project a combative image toward immigrants. (20 Aug 2025)

8. ICE planned to purchase a fleet of airplanes dedicated to deportations. Proposals for ICE-owned aircraft to double deportation capacity would deepen investment in removal infrastructure and expand the deportation industry's economic footprint. (20 Aug 2025)

9. FEMA required disaster aid applicants to have email addresses following a shift away from paper payments. Mandating email access for federal disaster aid applications risked excluding or delaying assistance for people without reliable internet, including many elderly, disabled, and low-income survivors. (22 Aug 2025)

10. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention rescinded embargoes on civet imports, Lucky Bamboo in water, and Haitian goat-skin handicrafts. Lifting long-standing import embargoes based on updated health risk assessments reduced trade restrictions and aligned with a broader deregulatory push to eliminate older public health rules. (22 Aug 2025)

11. Maintaining American Superiority by Improving Export Control Transparency Act became law to enhance transparency in export controls. New export control transparency requirements aimed to strengthen U.S. competitiveness and oversight of sensitive technologies in global trade. (19 Aug 2025)

12. The Trump Administration clawed back over \$12 million in federal grants from California's public health program over "gender ideology" concerns. Revoking health grants from California for allegedly promoting "gender ideology" used federal funding levers to punish a state's public health priorities and constrain reproductive and sexual health services. (21 Aug 2025)

## **Information, Memory, and Manipulation**

i. The Trump Administration officials left sensitive State Department documents on a public hotel printer and then misrepresented them as a lunch menu. Leaving summit logistics and staff contact details on a public printer

and falsely downplaying the incident undermined information security and public trust in the administration's candor. (16 Aug 2025; 17 Aug 2025)

2. Justice Department delayed and fragmented release of Epstein investigation files to Congress. Providing Epstein records in small batches rather than fully complying with subpoenas fueled suspicions that DOJ was managing disclosures to protect powerful interests. (18 Aug 2025; 22 Aug 2025)

3. Bureau of Labor Statistics and White House removed an independent BLS commissioner and nominated a loyalist critic amid disputes over data. Firing the BLS head over a "rigged" report and installing a political ally signaled that official economic statistics must align with presidential narratives, threatening data integrity. (18 Aug 2025)

4. Trump DOJ and U.S. Attorney's Office for D.C. investigated alleged manipulation of D.C. crime data despite evidence of low crime. A federal probe into whether D.C. police understated crime, led by a politically aligned U.S. attorney, risked being used to justify federal takeovers rather than neutrally assess public safety. (18 Aug 2025; 19 Aug 2025)

5. Health Secretary Robert F. Kennedy Jr. accused the American Academy of Pediatrics of a "pay-to-play" scheme over vaccine guidance. Kennedy's attack on pediatricians' vaccine recommendations cast professional guidance as corrupt, undermining trust in medical expertise and fueling skepticism about immunization. (19 Aug 2025)

6. President Trump and the White House criticized and ordered review of Smithsonian exhibits on slavery, race, trans identity, and immigration. Targeting Smithsonian content for focusing "too much" on slavery and marginalized identities signaled an effort to reshape public history toward more flattering national narratives. (19 Aug 2025; 21 Aug 2025)

7. ICE launched a militarized social media recruitment campaign featuring branded vehicles and combative messaging. ICE's stylized online campaign with "DEFEND THE HOMELAND" imagery promoted a warlike identity for immigration enforcement, shaping public perception of migrants as threats. (20 Aug 2025)

8. State Department fired top press officer Shahed Ghoreishi after a draft statement opposed forced Palestinian relocations. Removing a press officer over language critical of forced relocations suggested foreign policy messaging was being tightly controlled to avoid positions disfavored by allies or the administration. (20 Aug 2025)

9. President Trump and allies continued promoting false claims about mail-in voting fraud while media outlets paid defamation settlements. Trump's renewed attacks on mail-in voting, despite large defamation payouts

over similar lies, entrenched an election-fraud narrative that undermines confidence in legitimate results. (18 Aug 2025; 19 Aug 2025)

10. President Trump made demonstrably false claims about ending ten wars in 2025. Trump's boast of ending ten wars, contradicted by Russian officials, exemplified grandiose misinformation about foreign policy achievements that complicates public understanding of U.S. actions abroad. (20 Aug 2025)

11. Director of National Intelligence Tulsi Gabbard revoked security clearances for 37 current and former intelligence officials at Trump's direction. Stripping dozens of intelligence officials of clearances for alleged politicization and leaks risked punishing perceived critics and chilling internal dissent within the intelligence community. (19 Aug 2025)

12. Director of National Intelligence Tulsi Gabbard announced plans to cut ODNI staff by about 40–50% and scale back the Foreign Malign Influence Center. Large staff cuts at ODNI, including to units tracking foreign influence, could weaken analytic capacity and oversight of disinformation campaigns targeting U.S. democracy. (20 Aug 2025)

13. FBI and Justice Department raided former National Security Adviser John Bolton's home and office over classified information. High-profile searches of Bolton's home and office, following his criticism of Trump, raised concerns that classification investigations were being used to target political opponents. (21 Aug 2025; 22 Aug 2025)

14. Jeanine Pirro as U.S. Attorney for D.C. directed prosecutors to seek maximum charges in D.C. arrests while relaxing enforcement of some gun laws. Pirro's guidance to maximize charges and ease prosecution of certain gun offenses reoriented prosecutorial discretion toward harsher punishment of targeted defendants while softening rules favored by the administration. (22 Aug 2025)

15. Health Secretary Robert F. Kennedy Jr. ended major mRNA vaccine projects and questioned mainstream vaccine science. Terminating large mRNA research investments and casting doubt on vaccine safety undermined scientific consensus and could fuel misinformation about effective public health tools. (18 Aug 2025)

16. News site The City and adviser Winnie Greco reported and responded to a cash gift given to a reporter in a chip bag at a campaign event. A political adviser's cash gift to a reporter, framed as cultural, raised concerns about attempts to influence coverage and the blurred lines between access and bribery. (20 Aug 2025)

17. Election Assistance Commission and America First Legal Foundation opened a rulemaking petition that framed stricter voter registration docu-

mentation as integrity measures. The petition's rhetoric of "election integrity" around proof-of-citizenship requirements exemplified how restrictive voting changes are marketed as neutral safeguards despite likely suppressive effects. (21 Aug 2025)

18. The Trump Administration used ideological labels like "anti-American" and "gender ideology" to justify surveillance and funding cuts. Branding disfavored views and programs as "anti-American" or "gender ideology" provided a narrative frame for surveillance, visa revocations, and grant claw-backs targeting specific communities and ideas. (21 Aug 2025)

## CHAPTER 6

# WEEK 32 (23 AUG 2025 – 29 AUG 2025): EMERGENCIES AS EVERYDAY RULE

*A half-minute shift on the Democracy Clock marks a week when emergency logic, lawfare, and economic patronage quietly deepen executive control.*

This week highlights a strong effort to consolidate executive power across multiple areas, with intense pressure on federalism, civil-military boundaries, and the rule of law. Trump's team used executive orders and threats to reshape elections—targeting mail-in voting, cashless bail, and redistricting disputes—criminalize protests (such as flag-burning orders), and normalize federal takeovers of Democratic cities through National Guard deployments and rapid-response units. Law enforcement and intelligence tools were repeatedly used against political opponents and immigrants, while whistleblowers and civil servants at FEMA and CDC faced retaliation or removal. Economic policies also blurred the line between state and favored corporations through the Intel stake and broader nationalization efforts, while protections for millions of low-wage, disabled, and federal workers were targeted. Meanwhile, courts and some state actors pushed back—blocking deportations, shutting down abusive detention centers, and striking down gerrymanders—showing institutional resistance. However, the overall trend this week is deeply authoritarian: emergency tactics, militarized domestic governance, and politicized public health leadership are becoming ingrained, with inequality and stratified citizenship seen as intentional features rather than accidental outcomes.

## Power and Authority

1. President Trump and the Department of Defense planned and threatened deployments of National Guard and military forces to Chicago and Baltimore and extended armed Guard presence in Washington, D.C. Trump's plans and threats to deploy armed National Guard and possibly active-duty troops to Democratic-led cities, and to extend their presence in D.C., signaled use of military force to assert federal control over local governance and public order. (23 Aug 2025; 24 Aug 2025; 25 Aug 2025; 26 Aug 2025; 28 Aug 2025)

2. President Trump declared a crime emergency in Washington, D.C. and expanded federal control over local policing. By declaring and then deepening a D.C. crime emergency, Trump enabled federal takeover of local policing and related agencies, normalizing emergency justifications for centralizing security powers in the executive branch. (25 Aug 2025)

3. President Trump ordered creation of specialized National Guard units for public order missions. Directing the Pentagon to form National Guard units trained for public order tasks expanded the executive's ready tools for domestic deployments, blurring lines between military and civilian law enforcement in politically targeted jurisdictions. (26 Aug 2025)

4. President Trump expanded federal law enforcement control in Washington, D.C. through a quick reaction National Guard force. Establishing a National Guard quick reaction force for rapid deployment from D.C. increased centralized executive capacity to project armed power nationwide with limited local consent or oversight. (25 Aug 2025)

5. President Trump directed the Department of Justice to prioritize prosecuting American flag burning. Ordering DOJ to pursue flag-burning cases, despite Supreme Court protections, used criminal law to chill symbolic dissent and tested executive willingness to override established free-speech limits. (25 Aug 2025; 26 Aug 2025)

6. President Trump issued executive orders to end cashless bail policies nationally and in Washington, D.C. Trump's orders to end cashless bail and threaten federal funding for noncompliant jurisdictions leveraged fiscal power to reshape local criminal justice policy, likely increasing pretrial detention of poor defendants. (25 Aug 2025)

7. President Trump announced drafting of an executive order to eliminate mail-in balloting nationwide. By moving to abolish mail-in voting via executive order, Trump sought to unilaterally restrict a widely used voting method, undermining access and shifting election rules without legislative consensus. (24 Aug 2025)

8. President Trump threatened and attempted to remove Federal Reserve

Governor Lisa Cook. Trump's threats and attempted firing of Fed Governor Lisa Cook over disputed allegations challenged the legal protections for central bank independence and signaled willingness to purge perceived opponents from key economic posts. (24 Aug 2025; 25 Aug 2025; 27 Aug 2025)

9. President Trump criticized the Senate blue slip tradition for judicial and U.S. attorney appointments. Attacking the Senate's blue slip custom for home-state input on nominees reflected executive pressure to weaken legislative checks on judicial and prosecutorial appointments. (24 Aug 2025; 25 Aug 2025)

10. President Trump ordered a halt to the nearly complete Revolution Wind offshore project. Halting an 80%-complete offshore wind farm on asserted security grounds showed presidential power being used to reshape energy infrastructure and climate policy outside normal legislative processes. (23 Aug 2025)

11. President Trump and EPA Administrator Lee Zeldin publicly opposed and disparaged wind power projects. Senior executive opposition to wind projects, despite their economic and environmental benefits, signaled politicized use of federal influence over energy markets and climate-related investment. (23 Aug 2025)

12. President Trump announced and pursued a 10% federal ownership stake in Intel. Trump's demand and announcement of a 10% government stake in Intel, negotiated personally, blurred boundaries between state and private enterprise and concentrated economic leverage in the presidency. (23 Aug 2025; 24 Aug 2025)

13. President Trump and his administration advanced a broader plan to take ownership stakes in major federal contractors. Floating a policy of acquiring equity stakes in firms heavily reliant on federal contracts signaled a shift toward centralized, discretionary control over key industries tied to government business. (25 Aug 2025)

14. President Trump ended the de minimis tariff exemption for low-value imports. Eliminating tariff exemptions for small packages increased import costs for consumers and small businesses, using trade policy to reshape consumption and supply chains with limited public deliberation. (23 Aug 2025; 26 Aug 2025; 29 Aug 2025)

15. President Trump announced tariffs and threats against countries with digital services taxes. Threatening tariffs on countries that tax U.S. tech firms used trade coercion to defend corporate interests, risking escalated disputes that can spill into broader diplomatic and economic relations. (26 Aug 2025)

16. President Trump revoked extended Secret Service protection for former Vice President Kamala Harris. Canceling Harris's extended security

detail reversed a predecessor's decision and raised concerns that personal or partisan motives were influencing protection for high-profile political figures. (29 Aug 2025)

17. President Trump ordered the removal of collective bargaining rights from large segments of the federal workforce. Attempting to strip union rights from about one million federal workers represented a sweeping use of executive authority to weaken organized labor within the civil service. (29 Aug 2025)

18. President Trump cut the minimum wage for federal contractors. Reducing the minimum wage for federal contractors from \$17.75 to \$13.30 per hour used procurement power to lower labor standards for a large federally dependent workforce. (29 Aug 2025)

19. President Trump proposed eliminating federal wage and overtime protections for childcare and home care workers. Proposing to remove minimum wage and overtime protections for millions of care workers would structurally depress earnings in a feminized sector, deepening economic precarity for low-wage labor. (29 Aug 2025)

20. President Trump rescinded minimum wage protections for disabled workers. Rolling back wage protections for disabled workers weakened safeguards for a particularly vulnerable group, signaling reduced federal commitment to equitable labor standards. (29 Aug 2025)

21. President Trump proposed banning abortions at Department of Veterans Affairs facilities except to save a mother's life. The proposed VA abortion ban would sharply restrict reproductive healthcare for veterans, even in rape and incest cases, using federal health systems to narrow rights for a defined population. (29 Aug 2025)

22. President Trump ordered a federal takeover of Union Station in Washington, D.C. Assuming federal control of Union Station under a beautification rationale expanded direct executive influence over a key transportation hub in the capital, reinforcing visible federal presence. (28 Aug 2025)

23. President Trump issued an order excluding additional agencies from federal labor-management relations protections. Exempting more security-related agencies from standard labor-management rules reduced collective bargaining rights for affected federal employees in the name of national security. (28 Aug 2025)

24. President Trump directed federal architecture to favor classical and traditional styles. Mandating classical styles for federal buildings used design policy to project a particular vision of state authority and national identity through public architecture. (28 Aug 2025)

25. President Trump cut \$1.1 billion in funding for public broadcasting.

Slashing support for public broadcasting weakened a key source of noncommercial information, especially in rural areas reliant on public stations for emergency alerts and civic news. (28 Aug 2025)

26. President Trump and the Pentagon restricted Ukraine's use of U.S.-supplied long-range missiles to targets outside Russia. Limiting Ukraine's use of U.S. long-range missiles to avoid strikes inside Russia gave Washington tighter operational control over allied warfare, shaping the course of an external conflict through executive policy. (23 Aug 2025)

27. President Trump and the Federal Housing Finance Agency used mortgage data to investigate political opponents for alleged fraud. Deploying FHFA mortgage datasets to build cases against critics repurposed regulatory information systems for targeted political investigations, eroding trust in neutral financial oversight. (23 Aug 2025)

28. President Trump claimed record-high poll numbers despite contrary public data. Trump's false assertion of unprecedented approval ratings exemplified executive use of misinformation to project invulnerability and shape perceptions of popular support. (25 Aug 2025)

## **Institutions and Governance**

1. Department of Justice launched investigations into former FBI Director James Comey and former CIA Director John Brennan over Russia testimony. Opening criminal probes into former intelligence leaders for their Russia-related testimony risked politicizing accountability mechanisms and deterring frank oversight of presidential conduct. (23 Aug 2025)

2. Department of Justice provided a limited, largely redundant document production to Congress in the Epstein investigation. Sending mostly already-public Epstein records in response to a subpoena signaled executive resistance to robust legislative oversight in a politically sensitive case. (23 Aug 2025)

3. Department of Justice faced criticism for transferring Ghislaine Maxwell to a minimum-security prison. Moving Maxwell to a lower-security facility raised questions about equal treatment in high-profile sex trafficking cases and the justice system's responsiveness to victims' concerns. (23 Aug 2025)

4. Deputy Attorney General Todd Blanche ordered the arrest of Newark Mayor Ras Baraka during a chaotic incident later dismissed by courts. A senior DOJ official's direct role in a mayor's arrest, followed by case dismissal, suggested potential misuse of federal law enforcement against local elected officials. (23 Aug 2025)

5. Attorney General Pam Bondi opened mortgage fraud investigations into prominent Trump critics including Adam Schiff, Letitia James, and Lisa Cook. Targeting high-profile political opponents with criminal probes over disputed mortgage issues blurred the line between impartial justice and retaliatory lawfare. (23 Aug 2025)

6. Federal Bureau of Investigation conducted an early-morning search of John Bolton's home and office over alleged classified leaks. An aggressive, unannounced raid on a former national security adviser departed from typical negotiated procedures, reinforcing perceptions of law enforcement being used to intimidate critics. (23 Aug 2025)

7. Department of Justice was accused of coercing Kilmar Abrego Garcia into a guilty plea by threatening deportation destinations. Alleged DOJ threats to deport a defendant to a more dangerous country unless he pled guilty highlighted potential abuse of prosecutorial leverage in immigration-related cases. (23 Aug 2025)

8. House Oversight Committee subpoenaed extensive records from Jeffrey Epstein's estate. Seeking Epstein's financial and contact records, including materials potentially implicating officials, demonstrated Congress's use of investigative powers to scrutinize elite-linked abuse and prior prosecutorial decisions. (25 Aug 2025)

9. Representative Andy Biggs introduced legislation to extend federal control of Washington, D.C.'s police during emergencies. Proposing to lengthen default federal takeovers of D.C. policing would entrench central control over local law enforcement beyond short-term crises. (25 Aug 2025)

10. U.S. district court blocked the Trump administration from defunding 34 sanctuary jurisdictions over immigration policies. By halting funding cuts to sanctuary cities, the court reaffirmed limits on executive coercion of local governments and upheld constitutional federalism principles. (23 Aug 2025)

11. U.S. district court dismissed the Trump administration's lawsuit against all Maryland federal district judges over deportation stays. Throwing out an unprecedented suit against an entire district bench and affirming judicial immunity defended separation of powers against executive attempts to punish judges for adverse rulings. (26 Aug 2025)

12. U.S. district court ruled that Alina Habba was not lawfully serving as U.S. attorney for New Jersey. Finding an interim U.S. attorney appointment unlawful underscored judicial enforcement of statutory procedures for key prosecutorial posts against executive shortcuts. (25 Aug 2025)

13. Utah state court invalidated Utah's Republican-drawn congressional map and ordered a redraw using an independent commission. Striking down maps that bypassed a voter-approved redistricting commission reinforced

direct-democracy constraints on partisan gerrymandering and protected fairer representation. (25 Aug 2025; 27 Aug 2025)

14. U.S. district court temporarily blocked the deportation of Kilmar Abrego Garcia and required due process hearings. Judicial orders halting Abrego's deportation and demanding testimony on government conduct illustrated courts' role in checking retaliatory or irregular immigration enforcement. (25 Aug 2025; 27 Aug 2025)

15. NAACP and allied civil rights groups filed a federal lawsuit challenging Texas's new congressional map as a racial gerrymander. Challenging Texas's redistricting under the Voting Rights Act sought judicial enforcement of minority voting protections against maps that concentrated partisan gains. (26 Aug 2025)

16. Fulton County Superior Court fined the Fulton County Commission for refusing to appoint two Republicans to the county election board. Imposing daily fines on commissioners who rejected election-denialist nominees enforced state appointment laws but also raised concerns about compelled inclusion of anti-democratic actors in election administration. (27 Aug 2025)

17. Environmental Protection Agency and federal courts advanced consent decrees and rulings on Clean Air Act compliance in several regions. Proposed consent decrees and related actions in ozone and nonattainment cases showed environmental law being enforced through negotiated timelines, maintaining judicially reviewable standards for air quality. (28 Aug 2025)

18. Department of Government Efficiency whistleblower Charles Borges reported that a senior official copied Social Security data for over 300 million Americans to an unsecured server. Exposing a massive data security breach involving sensitive identifiers highlighted internal oversight failures and the need for strong protections for whistleblowers revealing systemic risks. (28 Aug 2025)

19. Congress froze federal spending in a way that created a \$1.1 billion shortfall in Washington, D.C.'s budget. A stopgap funding resolution that locked D.C.'s locally funded budget contributed to fiscal strain in the capital, illustrating how federal budget tools can indirectly constrain local governance. (28 Aug 2025)

20. FEMA employees sent a letter to Congress warning that staffing cuts endangered disaster response capacity. Hundreds of FEMA staff formally alerted lawmakers that attrition and budget cuts were eroding the agency's ability to manage disasters, seeking legislative oversight of executive management choices. (28 Aug 2025)

21. Texas Governor Greg Abbott and the Texas legislature enacted a new

congressional map significantly increasing expected Republican seats. Signing a map projected to boost Republican representation from 25 to 30 of 38 seats, despite minority growth, entrenched partisan advantage and prompted legal challenges over voting rights. (23 Aug 2025; 29 Aug 2025)

22. Missouri Governor Mike Kehoe called a special legislative session to redraw congressional districts and alter initiative petition rules. Convening lawmakers to pursue a more favorable congressional map and tighten citizen initiative procedures aimed to reshape both electoral boundaries and direct-democracy tools in partisan directions. (29 Aug 2025)

23. The Trump Administration announced plans to sue California to block mid-decade redistricting. Preparing litigation to stop California's mid-cycle redistricting, framed as countering Texas gains, used federal legal power to constrain a state's attempt to adjust representation. (25 Aug 2025)

24. Federal courts and regulators ordered closure of the Alligator Alcatraz immigration detention facility for legal violations. Mandating shutdown of a notorious Florida detention center for environmental and rights violations showed judicial and regulatory checks on abusive state-run facilities. (27 Aug 2025; 29 Aug 2025)

25. U.S. Department of Justice filed new allegations of bribery and money laundering involving a Smartmatic executive. Expanding a corruption case tied to a voting machine contract underscored the need for rigorous oversight of vendors whose systems underpin election administration. (25 Aug 2025)

26. U.S. Election Assistance Commission scheduled a public meeting to review updated voting system guidelines. Inviting public input on Voluntary Voting System Guidelines 2.1 supported transparent, expert-informed standards for election technology. (27 Aug 2025)

27. National Archives and Records Administration announced a FOIA Advisory Committee meeting on vexatious requests and reforms. Conveneing a FOIA advisory meeting on handling burdensome requests aimed to balance open-records access with administrative capacity, shaping future transparency practices. (26 Aug 2025)

28. Food and Drug Administration terminated the Arthritis Advisory Committee as a standing body. Disbanding a long-standing advisory committee reduced one channel for specialized external input into drug safety decisions for arthritis treatments. (29 Aug 2025)

29. Food and Drug Administration revoked the Emergency Use Authorization for COVID-19 convalescent plasma. Ending emergency authorization for convalescent plasma reflected a shift from crisis tools to standard regulatory pathways as licensed products became available. (27 Aug 2025)

30. Food and Drug Administration withdrew approval of the ALS drug

RELYVRI after failed Phase 3 results. Pulling approval for an ALS treatment that did not meet trial endpoints demonstrated adherence to evidence-based standards despite patient need and prior authorization. (29 Aug 2025)

31. Environmental Protection Agency issued and corrected multiple rules and approvals related to air quality and refinery exemptions. EPA's final decisions on small refinery exemptions and corrections to underground injection and air program rules illustrated ongoing technical governance of environmental standards with economic implications. (26 Aug 2025; 27 Aug 2025; 28 Aug 2025)

32. Federal Communications Commission updated and corrected rules on broadband deployment, certification bodies, obsolete regulations, and unlawful text messages. FCC rulemakings on broadband infrastructure, equipment authorization, and telemarketing consent adjusted regulatory frameworks that shape communications markets and consumer protections. (26 Aug 2025; 27 Aug 2025; 29 Aug 2025)

33. General Services Administration and procurement agencies adjusted federal acquisition thresholds and issued a new acquisition circular. Inflation-based updates to procurement thresholds and issuance of a new FAR circular maintained the legal framework for federal contracting and small-entity participation. (27 Aug 2025)

34. Food and Drug Administration determined regulatory review periods for multiple drugs and biologics affecting patent extensions. Setting review-period calculations for numerous therapies guided how long patents can be extended, balancing innovation incentives with eventual generic competition. (26 Aug 2025)

35. Food and Drug Administration announced public workshops and pilot programs on patient-focused drug development and CMC readiness. FDA's workshops and pilot program on patient experience data and manufacturing readiness aimed to refine regulatory processes while incorporating stakeholder input. (28 Aug 2025)

36. General Services Administration proposed revisions to Federal Audit Clearinghouse and customer experience information collections. GSA's proposed changes to audit and customer-experience data collection sought to improve oversight of federal funds and responsiveness of public services. (28 Aug 2025)

37. Census Bureau submitted information collection requests on identity certification and a national nurse survey. Census requests on identity verification and nurse workforce data supported secure records handling and informed health workforce planning through formal OMB-reviewed processes. (27 Aug 2025)

38. Environmental Protection Agency sought public comment on information collections for economics projects and minimum-risk pesticide labeling. EPA's PRA notices on economic focus groups and pesticide labeling reflected routine but important transparency in how regulatory data burdens are set and justified. (28 Aug 2025)

39. Federal Communications Commission requested public comment on accessibility and registration-related information collections. FCC's PRA notices on device accessibility and registration data aimed to ensure that regulatory reporting supports both disability access and efficient spectrum administration. (28 Aug 2025)

40. Environmental Protection Agency published a notice of availability for multiple Environmental Impact Statements. Releasing EIS notices for public review upheld statutory requirements for transparency in major federal projects' environmental impacts. (29 Aug 2025)

## Civil Rights and Dissent

1. The Trump Administration opened and expanded a large immigrant detention site at Fort Bliss, Texas. Operating a massive detention facility with historical echoes of internment underscored the scale and severity of immigration enforcement and its human rights implications. (23 Aug 2025)

2. Department of Homeland Security and ICE secretly transferred detainee Luis Manuel Rivas Velásquez between facilities without notifying family or counsel. Moving a detainee across states without notice, allegedly in retaliation for complaints, undermined due process and access to legal representation in immigration detention. (29 Aug 2025)

3. U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement transferred 18-year-old Benjamin Guerrero-Cruz across states without timely family notification. ICE's unannounced transfer of a young detainee, prompting proposed legislation for notification, highlighted opaque practices that strain family ties and oversight. (28 Aug 2025)

4. U.S. Border Patrol and ICE agents arrested two firefighters from a wild-fire crew during an immigration operation at an active fire. Detaining firefighters on immigration grounds amid a wildfire response disrupted emergency services and signaled that immigration enforcement could override public safety needs. (28 Aug 2025)

5. U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement agents were accused in a \$1 million claim of racial profiling and excessive force against a mother in Los Angeles. A damages claim alleging racially motivated detention and force by

immigration agents underscored civil rights concerns in everyday enforcement encounters. (29 Aug 2025)

6. The Trump Administration and Florida officials operated the Alligator Alcatraz immigration detention facility under harsh conditions until ordered closed. Court-ordered closure of a remote, abusive detention center highlighted systemic rights violations in immigration custody and the need for judicial intervention. (27 Aug 2025; 29 Aug 2025)

7. The Trump Administration threatened to cut federal sex education funds unless transgender content was removed. Conditioning sex education grants on erasing references to transgender people used funding leverage to marginalize LGBTQ+ identities and restrict inclusive health education. (27 Aug 2025)

8. The Trump Administration proposed banning nearly all abortions in VA facilities for veterans. The VA abortion proposal would sharply curtail reproductive autonomy for women veterans, even in cases of rape or incest, embedding restrictive norms in federal healthcare. (29 Aug 2025)

9. The Trump Administration revoked extended Secret Service protection for Kamala Harris. Removing extra security for a former vice president raised concerns that personal or partisan animus could influence the safety of high-profile political figures. (29 Aug 2025)

10. The Trump Administration and ICE increased immigration enforcement in Washington, D.C., causing widespread fear among restaurant workers. Heightened ICE activity alongside National Guard deployments in D.C. led many immigrant workers to stay home, illustrating how enforcement surges can suppress economic participation and civic life. (29 Aug 2025)

11. The Trump Administration and Naval Station Great Lakes sought military base support for immigration operations targeting sanctuary cities. Requesting naval base facilities to support immigration crackdowns in sanctuary jurisdictions further militarized immigration enforcement and strained local-federal relations. (28 Aug 2025)

12. The Trump Administration used federal power to challenge and reshape state redistricting in Texas, California, and Missouri. Coordinated efforts to entrench partisan maps in Texas and Missouri while suing to block California's redistricting reflected structural manipulation of representation that can dilute minority and opposition voting power. (23 Aug 2025; 25 Aug 2025; 29 Aug 2025)

13. The Trump Administration moved to criminalize flag burning in protest contexts. Executive efforts to prosecute flag burning, including talk of mandatory prison terms, directly targeted a form of political expression long recognized as protected speech. (25 Aug 2025; 26 Aug 2025)

14. The Trump Administration issued executive orders to end cashless bail, increasing pretrial detention risks for low-income defendants. By pressuring jurisdictions to abandon cashless bail, the administration favored detention systems that disproportionately confine poor people before trial, regardless of conviction. (25 Aug 2025)

15. The Trump Administration moved to eliminate mail-in balloting nationwide based on unfounded fraud claims. Targeting mail-in voting, widely used by many groups, would restrict a key access channel and amplify narratives that equate expanded participation with fraud. (24 Aug 2025)

16. NAACP and civil rights litigants sued Texas over congressional maps alleged to dilute Black political power. Challenging Texas's maps as racial gerrymanders sought to protect Black voters' ability to elect candidates of choice under the Voting Rights Act. (26 Aug 2025)

17. Fulton County Commission refused to appoint election-denialist Republicans to the county election board despite a court order. The commission's resistance to seating nominees tied to election denialism, and resulting fines, highlighted tensions between legal compliance and safeguarding election administration from anti-democratic actors. (27 Aug 2025)

18. FEMA employees were placed on administrative leave after signing a public dissent letter about agency mismanagement. Suspending staff who warned of Katrina-level disaster risks suggested retaliation against internal critics, chilling whistleblowing within emergency management. (25 Aug 2025; 27 Aug 2025)

19. CDC leadership and senior officials were fired or resigned en masse following conflicts over vaccine policy and political interference. The ouster of CDC Director Susan Monarez and resignations of multiple top officials over politicized vaccine directives weakened independent public health leadership and signaled intolerance for internal dissent. (27 Aug 2025; 28 Aug 2025)

20. The Trump Administration appointed Jim O'Neill, a non-physician ally, as acting CDC director after firing Susan Monarez. Installing a politically aligned, non-medical acting CDC head after removing an expert director further politicized a key health institution and raised concerns about evidence-based guidance. (29 Aug 2025)

21. The Trump Administration announced confusing new restrictions on COVID-19 vaccine eligibility. Ambiguous vaccine rules risked reducing access for high-risk groups and undermining public trust in health directives during an ongoing pandemic. (28 Aug 2025)

22. The Trump Administration cut minimum wage and overtime protections for millions of care and disabled workers and federal contractors.

Rolling back wage protections for contractors, disabled workers, and care workers deepened economic vulnerability for low-wage and marginalized groups reliant on federal labor standards. (29 Aug 2025)

23. The Trump Administration used National Guard and ICE deployments in D.C. and planned deployments in Chicago to police majority-minority communities. Heavy security presence and immigration enforcement in majority-Black and immigrant neighborhoods contributed to a perception of militarized control over communities of color. (23 Aug 2025; 25 Aug 2025; 26 Aug 2025; 28 Aug 2025; 29 Aug 2025)

24. The Trump Administration and Pentagon planned to restore a portrait of Confederate General Robert E. Lee at West Point's library. Reinstalling a Confederate portrait at a military academy, despite prior removal mandates, signaled official tolerance for symbols tied to slavery and rebellion in federal institutions. (29 Aug 2025)

25. The Trump Administration used federal power to challenge sanctuary policies and threaten funding to dozens of jurisdictions. Efforts to defund sanctuary cities and deploy immigration operations from military bases targeted local policies protecting immigrants, prompting judicial and state-level pushback. (23 Aug 2025; 28 Aug 2025)

26. The Trump Administration used DOJ investigations and threats against critics such as Chris Christie and Lisa Cook. Threatening investigations into political critics and independent officials blurred the line between legitimate accountability and intimidation of dissenters. (24 Aug 2025)

27. The Trump Administration cut public broadcasting funds that support severe weather alerts and rural information access. Reducing CPB funding limited access to life-saving alerts and civic information in underserved areas, disproportionately affecting rural and low-income communities. (28 Aug 2025)

28. The Trump Administration used FHFA mortgage data and DOJ investigations to pursue alleged fraud by political opponents. Leveraging detailed mortgage data and prosecutorial tools against critics risked turning financial oversight into a mechanism for selective repression. (23 Aug 2025)

29. The Trump Administration oversaw harsh immigration enforcement that led to secret transfers and retaliatory treatment of detainees. Patterns of opaque transfers and alleged retaliation against detainees who complained about conditions highlighted systemic vulnerabilities in immigrants' rights and legal protections. (23 Aug 2025; 27 Aug 2025; 29 Aug 2025)

30. The Trump Administration used emergency and crime narratives to justify extended federal control over local policing. Framing low-crime cities as in crisis to justify federal takeovers and troop deployments normalized

emergency rhetoric as a tool to limit local autonomy and protest. (25 Aug 2025; 26 Aug 2025; 28 Aug 2025)

31. The Trump Administration used DOJ and law enforcement to pursue politically sensitive cases like Epstein and Smartmatic. Handling of elite-linked cases, including limited Epstein disclosures and Smartmatic filings, raised questions about whether legal processes were even-handed or selectively protective. (23 Aug 2025; 25 Aug 2025)

32. The Trump Administration used rhetoric and policy to portray dissent and critical media as threats to democracy. Labeling critical broadcasters as threats and seeking to criminalize protest symbols framed opposition voices as inherently dangerous or disloyal. (24 Aug 2025; 25 Aug 2025)

33. The Trump Administration used overlapping crises and controversial initiatives to fragment public attention. Simultaneous pushes on bail, flag burning, tariffs, Intel ownership, city militarization, and redistricting created a dense policy storm that made sustained scrutiny of any single move more difficult. (23 Aug 2025; 24 Aug 2025; 25 Aug 2025; 26 Aug 2025; 27 Aug 2025; 28 Aug 2025; 29 Aug 2025)

34. The Trump Administration oversaw a data breach at DOGE involving Social Security records for nearly all Americans. A senior official's copying of massive Social Security datasets to an unsecured server exposed citizens to identity risks and highlighted weak internal controls over sensitive information. (28 Aug 2025)

35. The Trump Administration used FHFA mortgage data and DOJ probes to pursue alleged fraud by political opponents. Combining regulatory data access with prosecutorial discretion against critics blurred boundaries between neutral administration and targeted repression. (23 Aug 2025)

36. The Trump Administration oversaw harsh immigration enforcement that led to secret transfers and retaliatory treatment of detainees. Patterns of opaque transfers and alleged retaliation against detainees who complained about conditions highlighted systemic vulnerabilities in immigrants' rights and legal protections. (23 Aug 2025; 27 Aug 2025; 29 Aug 2025)

## Economic Structure

1. The Trump Administration canceled solar and wind projects funded under the CHIPS Act in favor of fossil fuels. Rolling back clean energy projects supported by industrial policy redirected public investment toward fossil fuels, affecting jobs, climate goals, and long-term energy competitiveness. (25 Aug 2025)

2. The Trump Administration removed the de minimis tariff exemption

for low-value imports, prompting foreign postal suspensions. Ending duty-free treatment for small imports disrupted cross-border e-commerce and raised costs, particularly for small businesses and lower-income consumers reliant on inexpensive goods. (26 Aug 2025)

3. The Trump Administration cut funding to the Corporation for Public Broadcasting by \$1.1 billion. Defunding public broadcasting reduced support for noncommercial media and emergency communications infrastructure, especially in rural communities with limited alternatives. (28 Aug 2025)

4. The Trump Administration proposed admitting 600,000 Chinese students to U.S. universities to bolster institutional finances. Linking large-scale foreign student admissions to the financial survival of lower-tier universities highlighted how higher education access is shaped by global market logics and domestic funding gaps. (25 Aug 2025)

5. Environmental Protection Agency approved Florida's emissions control plan for commercial and industrial incinerators. Approving Florida's plan made state-level emission limits federally enforceable, aligning local industry operations with national air quality standards. (25 Aug 2025)

6. Environmental Protection Agency proposed renewal of information collection for methylene chloride regulation. Seeking comment on data requirements for methylene chloride controls affected compliance costs and safety practices in chemical-related industries. (25 Aug 2025)

7. Food and Drug Administration announced a public meeting on staffing for drug and biosimilar review programs. Reviewing hiring and retention in drug review programs addressed capacity constraints that influence how quickly new therapies reach the market. (25 Aug 2025)

8. Environmental Protection Agency allowed temporary use of certain incinerators for disaster debris without full Clean Air Act compliance. Relaxing some emission requirements for disaster debris burning balanced rapid cleanup needs against environmental protections, with implications for affected communities' air quality. (26 Aug 2025)

9. Federal Communications Commission finalized rules to accelerate wireline broadband deployment by easing infrastructure barriers. New timelines and pole-attachment processes aimed to speed broadband buildout, affecting competition, rural access, and digital equity. (26 Aug 2025)

10. Federal Communications Commission streamlined satellite and earth station application processing to support space innovation. Simplifying licensing for satellite and earth stations reduced regulatory friction in the growing commercial space sector, potentially favoring well-resourced entrants. (27 Aug 2025)

11. Environmental Protection Agency received an application for a large-

scale experimental release of genetically modified mosquitoes. Considering a permit for billions of modified mosquito eggs raised questions about environmental risk governance and the role of federal regulators in novel biotech deployments. (27 Aug 2025)

12. Environmental Protection Agency approved multiple state air quality implementation plans and interstate transport measures. Approving SIPs for the Mojave Desert, South Dakota, and Texas confirmed state compliance with federal air standards, shaping industrial emission constraints across regions. (28 Aug 2025)

13. Environmental Protection Agency denied a petition to object to TVA's Shawnee Fossil Plant operating permit. Upholding a major coal plant's permit over environmental objections maintained existing fossil fuel operations, with consequences for local air quality and climate policy. (28 Aug 2025)

14. Environmental Protection Agency received NASA's emergency exemption request to use a new biocide on the International Space Station. Evaluating NASA's request to deploy an unregistered chemical in space highlighted how emergency-use pesticide rules extend beyond terrestrial agriculture into specialized federal missions. (28 Aug 2025)

15. Food and Drug Administration submitted GRAS and medical device registration information collections for OMB review. FDA's PRA submissions on GRAS substances and device registration shaped how industry reports safety information and how regulators track products in the market. (26 Aug 2025; 29 Aug 2025)

16. Food and Drug Administration issued a priority review voucher for a rare pediatric disease drug. Granting a tradable priority review voucher for a pediatric cancer drug incentivized investment in rare-disease treatments by conferring valuable regulatory advantages. (28 Aug 2025)

17. General Services Administration updated information collection for the Art-in-Architecture program to align with new policy priorities. Revising data collection for commissioning public art, with emphasis on certain historical subjects, linked cultural spending to evolving executive preferences. (28 Aug 2025)

18. Environmental Protection Agency published a notice of availability for multiple Environmental Impact Statements. Making EIS documents available for comment ensured that large infrastructure and energy projects proceeded under transparent environmental review processes. (29 Aug 2025)

## Information, Memory, and Manipulation

1. President Trump called for revoking ABC and NBC broadcast licenses as alleged threats to democracy. Urging the FCC to strip major networks of licenses for critical coverage signaled willingness to use regulatory power to intimidate or silence independent media. (24 Aug 2025)
2. Representative Nancy Mace amplified a false school shooter claim by posting a misidentified student video. Sharing and not fully correcting a hoax about a campus shooter from an official platform illustrated how elected officials can spread misinformation that undermines public trust and safety. (25 Aug 2025)
3. President Trump falsely claimed record-high poll numbers despite low-40s approval ratings. Misrepresenting polling data to project overwhelming support exemplified elite-driven disinformation aimed at shaping perceptions of legitimacy. (25 Aug 2025)
4. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention leadership were accused of manipulating or obscuring vaccine data under political pressure. Resignation letters citing data manipulation and lack of transparency suggested that scientific information within CDC was being reshaped to fit political agendas. (28 Aug 2025)
5. Robert F. Kennedy Jr. and the Department of Health and Human Services announced confusing COVID-19 vaccine restrictions that muddled eligibility and access. Ambiguous vaccine guidance risked undermining public understanding and confidence in immunization policy, complicating informed health decisions. (28 Aug 2025)
6. Department of Government Efficiency official copied Social Security data for over 300 million Americans to an unsecured cloud server. The mass copying of sensitive identifiers to an insecure environment created systemic privacy risks and highlighted vulnerabilities in government data stewardship. (28 Aug 2025)
7. Indivisible issued a statement warning that militarization of majority-Black cities undermined local democracy. Framing federal control of policing in Black-majority cities as racially motivated overreach sought to counter official narratives and preserve public memory of contested actions. (29 Aug 2025)
8. Pentagon and Trump administration decided to restore a portrait of Confederate General Robert E. Lee at West Point's library. Reinstating a Confederate portrait at a military academy, after prior removal mandates, reflected an official choice to foreground contested historical symbols in national memory. (29 Aug 2025)

9. General Services Administration revised Art-in-Architecture data collection to emphasize historically significant Americans and events. Adjusting how public art commissions are documented and prioritized can subtly steer which histories and figures are celebrated in federal spaces. (28 Aug 2025)

10. Federal Communications Commission sought comment on accessibility of digital apparatus and navigation devices for blind and visually impaired users. FCC's review of accessibility information collections aimed to ensure that people with disabilities can access digital media and navigation tools on equal terms. (28 Aug 2025)

11. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention proposed a standardized Data Management Plan template for public comment. CDC's move to standardize data management across programs sought to improve transparency, reproducibility, and sharing of federally funded research data. (26 Aug 2025)

12. Federal Communications Commission invited comment on information collections related to registration numbers and call signs. Reviewing data requirements for associating FCC registration numbers with licenses aimed to streamline regulatory tracking while managing administrative burdens. (28 Aug 2025)

13. Environmental Protection Agency sought renewal of information collection for economics-related focus groups. EPA's economics focus-group ICR renewal supported more accurate survey design for policies affecting health risks and environmental quality. (28 Aug 2025)

14. Food and Drug Administration announced a workshop on integrating patient experience data into drug development. FDA's patient-focused workshop aimed to refine how patient-reported outcomes inform regulatory decisions, potentially shifting evidentiary standards in drug approvals. (28 Aug 2025)

15. General Services Administration submitted an information collection to improve federal customer experience under OMB guidance. GSA's customer-experience survey initiative sought structured feedback to make federal services more responsive and accountable to the public. (28 Aug 2025)

16. Environmental Protection Agency published a notice of availability for Environmental Impact Statements and EPA comments. Making EIS filings and EPA comments publicly accessible supported informed debate and oversight of major federal projects' environmental consequences. (29 Aug 2025)

## **CHAPTER 7**

### **WEEK 33 (30 AUG 2025 – 5 SEP 2025): AUTHORITARIAN POWERS AS POLICY**

*A week of near-stillness on the Democracy Clock masks how executive orders, security forces, and lawfare quietly consolidate personal rule and stratified citizenship.*

This week poses a severe, multi-front challenge to American democracy, putting significant pressure on executive power, civil liberties, and the integrity of the administrative state. The White House aggressively expands unilateral authority—over elections (voter ID and mail voting orders), immigration (Alien Enemies Act, mass deportation machinery, third-country offshoring), trade (emergency tariffs, Japan order), and military actions (Caribbean strike, domestic Guard deployments, Pentagon rebranding). Meanwhile, key technocratic institutions—CDC, FDA, EPA, SSA, USAGM, PBS, Northwestern, Harvard—are targeted for purging, defunding, or discipline, often replacing experts with loyalists and ideologues, prioritizing political loyalty over competence. Immigration and policing policies are moving toward a quasi-security state: mass ICE/CBP hiring with relaxed standards, spyware, military lawyers acting as judges, and incentives for local police to participate in federal crackdowns. However, courts, states, and some Congressional members push back with rulings against tariffs and military actions, restrictions on child deportations, state efforts to oppose vaccine and wind mandates, and bipartisan calls for transparency regarding Epstein. Overall, the week leans heavily toward normalizing emergency governance, militarizing domestic order, and neutralizing bureaucracy to serve the president's personal and electoral aims.

## Power and Authority

1. The Trump Administration fired CDC director Susan Monarez and reshaped CDC leadership. The administration removed CDC director Susan Monarez soon after confirmation and installed an unqualified loyalist, prompting senior resignations and signaling political control over a key public health agency rather than independent, expertise-based leadership. (30 Aug 2025)

2. Director of National Intelligence Tulsi Gabbard publicly disclosed an undercover CIA officer's identity and revoked clearances. By outing a senior undercover CIA officer and stripping clearances on Trump's orders, the DNI used classified authorities in a politicized way that risks national security and chills independent intelligence work. (30 Aug 2025)

3. The Trump Administration fired at least seven EPA employees for signing a dissent letter. Dismissing EPA staff for internal criticism punished professional dissent inside a regulatory agency, undermining neutral expertise and discouraging employees from flagging policy or legal concerns. (30 Aug 2025)

4. Charles Borges, Social Security Administration chief data officer resigned after retaliation for whistleblowing on massive data breaches. The forced resignation of SSA's chief data officer after he exposed insecure uploads of millions of Americans' data showed how internal watchdogs can be driven out, weakening accountability over sensitive government information. (30 Aug 2025)

5. White House and Office of Management and Budget unilaterally canceled \$4.9 billion in congressionally approved foreign aid. Canceling billions in appropriated foreign aid without Congress asserted executive control over spending, challenging the legislature's constitutional power of the purse and weakening checks on presidential budgetary decisions. (30 Aug 2025)

6. President Donald Trump announced plans for executive orders to mandate voter ID and curb mail-in voting. Trump's pledge to unilaterally impose nationwide voter ID and sharply restrict mail voting, despite state control over elections, signaled an attempt to centralize electoral rulemaking in the presidency and narrow access to the ballot. (30 Aug 2025; 31 Aug 2025)

7. President Donald Trump pressed Republican state legislators to redraw congressional maps for partisan gain. By urging GOP-controlled states to reconfigure districts to boost Republican seats, Trump used presidential influence to shape state redistricting for partisan advantage, blurring lines between executive power and fair representation. (31 Aug 2025)

8. President Donald Trump directed the Justice Department to investigate Democratic fundraising platform ActBlue. Ordering DOJ scrutiny of ActBlue while leaving the GOP's WinRed untouched deployed federal law enforcement against a core opposition funding tool, using prosecutorial power to tilt the political playing field. (31 Aug 2025)

9. President Donald Trump announced relocation of Space Force headquarters from Colorado to Alabama. Moving Space Force headquarters after lobbying by an allied senator suggested basing decisions for a major military command were driven by political patronage rather than strategic or operational criteria. (1 Sep 2025; 3 Sep 2025)

10. President Donald Trump announced he would award Rudy Giuliani the Presidential Medal of Freedom. Granting the nation's highest civilian honor to Giuliani, disbarred for efforts to overturn the 2020 election, used state symbolism to reward loyalty to anti-democratic actions rather than public service. (1 Sep 2025)

11. President Donald Trump asserted he needed authoritarian powers to restore prosperity. Trump's claim that economic recovery requires authoritarian powers framed democratic constraints as obstacles to prosperity, normalizing the idea that expanded unchecked executive authority is desirable. (4 Sep 2025)

12. President Donald Trump issued an executive order implementing a new tariff framework with Japan. Trump's order setting broad tariffs on Japanese imports and structuring investment commitments concentrated major trade decisions in the executive branch, reinforcing his use of emergency-style trade powers. (4 Sep 2025)

13. President Donald Trump issued an executive order modifying reciprocal tariffs and trade procedures. By revising tariff scopes and centralizing procedures for trade and security agreements under an ongoing 'national emergency,' Trump entrenched executive control over trade policy normally shared with Congress. (5 Sep 2025)

14. President Donald Trump signed an executive order rebranding the Department of Defense as the Department of War. Rebranding the Pentagon as the Department of War via executive order, without legislation, asserted presidential authority over the identity of a core security institution and emphasized a more aggressive posture. (5 Sep 2025)

15. Health and Human Services Secretary Robert F. Kennedy Jr. canceled \$500 million in mRNA vaccine research funding. Canceling large-scale mRNA vaccine research funding advanced Kennedy's ideological agenda over scientific consensus, weakening federal capacity to respond to future

health crises and concentrating health policy in one politicized office. (5 Sep 2025)

16. President Donald Trump issued an executive order to strengthen protections for U.S. nationals wrongfully detained abroad. Creating a designation regime and sanctions for states that wrongfully detain Americans expanded executive tools in foreign policy, potentially improving leverage for citizens' rights while centralizing decisions in the presidency. (5 Sep 2025)

## Institutions and Governance

1. Environmental Protection Agency reversed impairment designations for an Iowa river. Reversing river impairment designations weakened water-quality protections and suggested regulatory decisions were being relaxed in favor of agricultural interests, reducing environmental oversight capacity. (30 Aug 2025)

2. Anthony Tata filed a defamation lawsuit in Florida over alleged cyber-stalking. A senior former defense official's personal defamation suit raised questions about the conduct and vulnerability to coercion of high-ranking security figures, though it did not directly alter institutional rules. (30 Aug 2025)

3. U.S. Court of Appeals for the D.C. Circuit ruled that most of Trump's emergency-based tariffs exceeded presidential authority. The appeals court's 7–4 decision striking down broad tariffs imposed under emergency powers reaffirmed congressional primacy over trade and checked expansive interpretations of executive economic authority. (30 Aug 2025)

4. U.S. District Court for the Southern District of New York allowed 9/11 victims' lawsuit against Saudi Arabia to proceed. Letting claims against Saudi Arabia go to trial showed federal courts willing to entertain accountability cases involving powerful foreign partners, reinforcing judicial independence in sensitive national-security matters. (30 Aug 2025)

5. U.S. Court of Appeals for the Fifth Circuit blocked use of the Alien Enemies Act to deport Venezuelans. By enjoining deportations under a wartime statute absent an actual invasion, the appeals court limited executive attempts to stretch old emergency laws for routine immigration enforcement. (2 Sep 2025)

6. U.S. District Court for the Northern District of California ruled Trump's deployment of National Guard troops in Los Angeles illegal. Judge Charles Breyer's ruling that using Guard and Marines for LA law enforcement violated the Posse Comitatus Act reinforced legal barriers against domestic military policing. (2 Sep 2025; 3 Sep 2025; 5 Sep 2025)

7. U.S. Supreme Court (petition stage) received Trump's emergency appeals on tariffs and an FTC appointee. Trump's emergency petitions seeking to preserve his tariff regime and block reinstatement of a Biden FTC member asked the Supreme Court to endorse broad presidential control over trade and independent regulators. (3 Sep 2025; 4 Sep 2025; 5 Sep 2025)

8. Attorney General Pam Bondi issued immigration rulings narrowing asylum eligibility. New precedential decisions limiting asylum for families targeted by gangs and domestic violence victims used the AG's quasi-judicial power to restrict humanitarian protections through executive-controlled adjudication. (2 Sep 2025)

9. U.S. Court of Appeals temporarily allowed operations at the 'Alligator Alcatraz' immigration jail to continue. Staying a lower-court closure order for a controversial Florida detention center kept a harsh facility open while litigation proceeds, reflecting judicial deference to state and federal detention practices. (3 Sep 2025; 4 Sep 2025)

10. District of Columbia government sued the Trump administration over federal law-enforcement takeover and National Guard deployment. DC's lawsuits challenging federal control of local policing and Guard deployments invoked home-rule and constitutional limits, using courts to contest centralization of security power in the executive. (3 Sep 2025; 4 Sep 2025)

11. U.S. Department of Justice sued Boston over its sanctuary city policies. DOJ's suit against Boston for limiting cooperation with immigration enforcement used federal litigation to pressure local governments that resist the administration's immigration agenda. (3 Sep 2025; 4 Sep 2025)

12. New York Attorney General Letitia James appealed to reinstate a \$500 million civil fraud penalty against Trump. Seeking to restore a large fraud judgment against Trump tested whether state courts will hold a sitting president financially accountable for prior business misconduct. (4 Sep 2025)

13. Federal judge ordered restoration of \$2.6 billion in unlawfully terminated grants to Harvard University. Reversing retaliatory grant cuts to Harvard protected academic institutions from funding threats tied to policy disputes with the White House, reinforcing legal limits on politicized budget punishment. (5 Sep 2025)

14. Gun Owners of America and allied states filed lawsuits seeking to overturn National Firearms Act restrictions. Coordinated suits to dismantle NFA rules on suppressors and short-barreled guns aimed to use courts to roll back longstanding federal gun controls, potentially reshaping public-safety regulation. (5 Sep 2025)

15. Supreme Court of the United States (anticipated filing) was expected to receive Trump's petition on Alien Enemies Act deportations. Trump's plan to

seek Supreme Court review of limits on his Alien Enemies Act deportations set up a high-stakes test of judicial willingness to endorse expansive wartime-style immigration powers. (5 Sep 2025)

16. Federal Communications Commission announced and reviewed multiple advisory meetings and information collections. FCC notices on CSRIC meetings, radio-service data collections, robocall authentication, and Next Gen TV rules reflected routine regulatory governance and public-comment processes in communications policy. (2 Sep 2025; 3 Sep 2025; 4 Sep 2025; 5 Sep 2025)

17. Environmental Protection Agency issued and adjusted multiple air, water, and waste regulatory decisions. EPA actions on hazardous air standards, effluent rules, coal ash, pesticides, and state implementation plans showed ongoing use of administrative procedures to shape environmental protections and state-federal responsibilities. (2 Sep 2025; 3 Sep 2025; 4 Sep 2025; 5 Sep 2025)

18. Food and Drug Administration amended food additive rules and advanced multiple medical-device and survey information collections. FDA regulatory and data-collection notices on additives, devices, exports, and food safety surveys reflected technocratic governance that underpins health standards and market access. (3 Sep 2025; 4 Sep 2025; 5 Sep 2025)

19. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention advanced data collections for opioid reference kits and training systems. CDC's proposed data collections for opioid materials and training platforms aimed to improve surveillance and workforce development, illustrating how federal health agencies rely on structured information systems. (4 Sep 2025)

20. U.S. Census Bureau and General Services Administration sought public comment on business surveys and construction procurement data. Requests for comment on the Annual Business Survey and CMc procurement data reflected routine oversight of economic statistics and federal contracting practices. (2 Sep 2025)

21. Occupational Safety and Health Administration processed Nationally Recognized Testing Laboratory recognitions. OSHA's renewal and expansion of NRTL recognitions for DEKRA and TUV SUD America maintained third-party product safety certification infrastructure that supports workplace and consumer protections. (2 Sep 2025)

22. Environmental Protection Agency issued a notice of availability for multiple Environmental Impact Statements. Publishing EIS availability under the Clean Air Act ensured public access to environmental reviews for major federal projects, supporting transparency in infrastructure decision-making. (5 Sep 2025)

## Civil Rights and Dissent

1. Department of Homeland Security argued all illegal entrants are ineligible for bond and routinely stayed immigration judges' bond orders. DHS's practice of appealing and automatically staying bond decisions kept migrants jailed despite judicial rulings, eroding due process and judicial authority in immigration detention. (30 Aug 2025)
2. Immigration and Customs Enforcement reinstated and expanded use of Paragon spyware capable of hacking encrypted phones. Restoring ICE's contract for powerful Israeli-made spyware increased the government's capacity to surveil immigrants, activists, and journalists, raising risks of rights violations with limited oversight. (30 Aug 2025; 2 Sep 2025)
3. Chicago Mayor Brandon Johnson signed an executive order barring city police from assisting federal civil immigration enforcement. Chicago's order limiting cooperation with federal immigration raids sought to protect residents' rights and local autonomy against an aggressive federal crackdown. (31 Aug 2025)
4. Federal judge Sparkle Sooknanan blocked deportation of about 600 unaccompanied Guatemalan children and ordered their return to ORR custody. Halting the mass removal of unaccompanied children enforced statutory protections for trafficking victims and checked executive attempts to bypass safeguards for vulnerable migrants. (31 Aug 2025; 3 Sep 2025)
5. The Trump Administration suspended most visitor visas for Palestinian passport holders. Halting visas for Palestinians restricted mobility based on nationality, straining diplomatic ties and reinforcing a tiered system of access to the United States. (31 Aug 2025)
6. The Trump Administration deployed National Guard troops in Washington DC for crime control. Using Guard troops for routine crime response in the capital blurred lines between military and civilian policing, normalizing militarized responses to domestic issues. (31 Aug 2025; 5 Sep 2025)
7. White House canceled union contracts and stripped collective bargaining protections from hundreds of thousands of federal workers. Terminating union agreements and protections for roughly 450,000 federal employees weakened organized labor in the public sector and made civil servants more vulnerable to political pressure. (1 Sep 2025)
8. U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services banned nongovernmental voter registration at naturalization ceremonies. Prohibiting outside groups from registering new citizens at ceremonies removed a key on-ramp to voting for immigrants, subtly constraining their political incorporation. (2 Sep 2025)
9. Government Accountability Project called for investigations into

alleged retaliation against FEMA whistleblowers. Reports that over 30 FEMA employees were suspended after signing a warning letter suggested a climate of retaliation against internal critics, discouraging disclosure of agency problems. (2 Sep 2025)

10. California legislature passed a bill requiring schools to alert communities when immigration agents are on campus. Mandating alerts about immigration enforcement at educational institutions aimed to protect immigrant students and families from surprise raids, reinforcing school spaces as safer civic environments. (3 Sep 2025)

11. House of Representatives voted to block a plaque honoring Jan. 6 officers and created a new Jan. 6 subcommittee. Refusing to honor officers while launching a new GOP-led Jan. 6 inquiry signaled efforts to reshape public memory of the insurrection and downplay law enforcement's defense of Congress. (2 Sep 2025; 3 Sep 2025)

12. Department of Homeland Security launched a massive recruitment drive for ICE and CBP with lowered standards and incentives. Hiring 13,000 new immigration officers with relaxed age and training requirements and bonuses risked expanding a powerful enforcement apparatus faster than accountability systems can keep pace. (2 Sep 2025)

13. Federal Bureau of Investigation and Department of Justice arrested veteran Bajun Mavalwalla on conspiracy charges over an ICE protest. Charging a protester with conspiracy to impede officers for a demonstration at an ICE facility signaled a willingness to use serious federal charges that may chill lawful protest. (2 Sep 2025; 5 Sep 2025)

14. Department of Justice considered banning transgender people from gun ownership by labeling them mentally ill. Exploring a categorical firearms ban for trans people by redefining their identity as mental illness weaponized regulatory criteria to target a specific minority group. (3 Sep 2025; 4 Sep 2025)

15. The Trump Administration required ID checks for parents seeking to reunite with unaccompanied children, leading to arrests. Using reunification appointments to arrest parents turned a protective process into an enforcement trap, deterring families from reclaiming children and deepening fear in immigrant communities. (2 Sep 2025; 4 Sep 2025)

16. U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services added law enforcement agents to execute immigration arrests and warrants. Empowering USCIS with arrest authority shifted a benefits-focused agency toward enforcement, blurring lines between service provision and policing in the immigration system. (4 Sep 2025)

17. HHS employees and former staff publicly demanded RFK Jr.'s resigna-

tion over vaccine misinformation and staffing decisions. Over 1,000 HHS employees calling for the health secretary's resignation highlighted internal resistance to politicized public health policy and defended scientific norms within government. (3 Sep 2025)

18. Florida legislature advanced a proposal to eliminate all vaccine requirements for public school students. Removing school vaccine mandates would weaken herd immunity and public health protections for children, prioritizing ideological positions over evidence-based safeguards. (5 Sep 2025)

19. Democratic National Committee, voting-rights groups, and DOJ reached an agreement to allow 98,000 North Carolina voters to cure ID issues via provisional ballots. A consent agreement preserving ballots for tens of thousands of voters countered an attempted tightening of ID rules, protecting access while litigation over state requirements continues. (3 Sep 2025)

20. U.S. Supreme Court overturned Roe v. Wade in 2022, enabling widespread abortion bans. The Court's earlier Dobbs decision, recounted this week, removed federal abortion protections and allowed many states to sharply restrict reproductive autonomy, reshaping bodily rights and health access. (2 Sep 2025)

21. U.S. Department of Justice launched a criminal investigation into Federal Reserve governor Lisa Cook. Investigating a Fed governor for alleged mortgage fraud raised questions about whether prosecutorial discretion is being applied evenly or used to pressure independent economic officials. (4 Sep 2025; 5 Sep 2025)

22. U.S. House of Representatives declined to censure Rep. LaMonica McIver after her indictment over ICE facility oversight. Blocking censure of a member indicted while conducting oversight signaled some legislative willingness to defend institutional prerogatives against criminalization of watchdog activity. (3 Sep 2025; 4 Sep 2025)

23. Survivors of Jeffrey Epstein's abuse and allies in Congress held a Capitol press conference demanding justice and full release of files. Epstein survivors' public testimony and demands for document disclosure pressed institutions to confront elite abuse networks and resist quiet burial of high-profile crimes. (31 Aug 2025; 1 Sep 2025; 3 Sep 2025; 4 Sep 2025)

24. The Trump Administration arranged a military flyover that disrupted Epstein survivors' press conference. A fighter-jet flyover during survivors' remarks in a no-fly zone appeared to drown out critical speech, raising concerns about using military assets to overshadow or intimidate civil society voices. (4 Sep 2025)

25. Community organizers conducted ICE watch trainings and mobilized residents in response to federal crackdowns. Grassroots trainings on rights

during ICE encounters helped communities build collective capacity to resist abusive enforcement and defend vulnerable neighbors. (4 Sep 2025)

26. U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services and DHS expanded immigration enforcement roles and incentives for local police cooperation. Offering to pay salaries and bonuses for local officers who join federal immigration programs deepened entanglement between local policing and federal deportation machinery, affecting trust in law enforcement. (2 Sep 2025)

27. The Trump Administration attempted to deport unaccompanied children and used third-country deportations to Eswatini. Efforts to deport children en masse and send former prisoners to Eswatini, where they faced illegal detention, showed a willingness to offload vulnerable people to opaque foreign custody. (3 Sep 2025)

28. U.S. Department of Justice sued Boston and other sanctuary jurisdictions over immigration policies. Targeting sanctuary cities through litigation pressured local governments that prioritize immigrant protections, using federal courts to constrain alternative models of public safety. (3 Sep 2025; 4 Sep 2025)

29. The Trump Administration halted security assistance programs for some European allies. Cutting security aid to Eastern European partners risked weakening democratic allies' defenses and signaled a transactional approach to collective security. (3 Sep 2025; 4 Sep 2025)

## Economic Structure

1. Iowa state officials removed funding to promote a water pollution report. Cutting funds to publicize findings on agricultural water pollution limited public awareness of environmental harms, weakening democratic oversight over powerful local industries. (30 Aug 2025)

2. U.S. Agency for Global Media under acting CEO Kari Lake announced layoffs of 532 employees at Voice of America and sister outlets. Large-scale layoffs at VOA and related broadcasters under a politicized leadership risked shrinking independent U.S. international broadcasting capacity and making information flows more vulnerable to partisan control. (30 Aug 2025)

3. The Trump Administration withdrew and canceled over \$1.3 billion in federal support for offshore wind projects. Pulling DOE, Interior, and Transportation backing from major offshore wind projects undermined clean-energy investment, jobs, and grid transition, favoring incumbent fossil interests over long-term public goods. (31 Aug 2025)

4. Labor leaders criticized Trump energy policy for harming working families. Union leaders warned that cuts to renewable projects reduce jobs

and raise energy costs, highlighting how policy choices can shift economic burdens from corporations to workers and low-income households. (31 Aug 2025)

5. Energy analysts and regulators reported rising electricity prices linked to renewable funding cuts and grid slowdowns. Evidence that power prices are climbing as renewable investments and grid additions are cut showed how regulatory rollbacks can worsen affordability and deepen economic inequality. (31 Aug 2025)

6. The Trump Administration imposed broad tariffs that hurt farmers and increased the trade deficit. Tariffs that strained agriculture and widened the trade deficit illustrated how unilateral trade wars can destabilize domestic sectors while being justified with misleading claims of huge revenue gains. (30 Aug 2025; 31 Aug 2025; 1 Sep 2025; 3 Sep 2025)

7. World Liberty Financial launched a Trump-linked cryptocurrency token that quickly lost value. The rapid drop in a Trump-branded crypto token raised concerns that political branding is being used to attract retail investors into risky schemes that primarily enrich insiders. (31 Aug 2025)

8. Cracker Barrel management reversed a logo change after political backlash from conservatives and Trump. A restaurant chain's quick reversal of a branding update after right-wing criticism showed how corporate decisions can be steered by partisan pressure rather than broad consumer or worker interests. (30 Aug 2025)

9. The Trump Administration terminated over \$16 billion in climate grants authorized under Biden. Ending large climate grant programs shifted federal resources away from mitigation and adaptation, privileging short-term fiscal or industry interests over long-term environmental and economic resilience. (2 Sep 2025)

10. Northwestern University president resigned after the federal government froze nearly \$800 million in research funding. The Northwestern president's resignation in response to a massive research funding freeze underscored how federal financial leverage can pressure universities' autonomy and academic freedom. (4 Sep 2025)

11. Congressional Budget Office estimated Trump's tax law heavily favored millionaires over low-income families. CBO findings that Trump's tax law gave minimal relief to families under \$50,000 while delivering large gains to millionaires highlighted how fiscal policy entrenched inequality and favored capital. (4 Sep 2025)

12. Wall Street Journal–NORC pollsters reported deep public pessimism about economic mobility. Survey data showing most Americans no longer believe hard work leads to getting ahead reflected eroding faith in the

economic system, which can weaken engagement with democratic institutions. (4 Sep 2025)

13. ADP reported a sharp slowdown in private-sector hiring. Weaker job growth and rising jobless claims signaled mounting economic stress, which can heighten public vulnerability to demagogic narratives and policy shortcuts. (3 Sep 2025)

14. The Trump Administration froze and restructured major research and media funding streams. Funding cuts to CDC programs, USAGM broadcasters, PBS, and university research collectively weakened public goods in health, information, and science, shifting power toward private and partisan actors. (30 Aug 2025; 3 Sep 2025; 4 Sep 2025)

## Information, Memory, and Manipulation

1. U.S. Agency for Global Media and PBS implemented layoffs following Trump administration funding cuts. Staff reductions at VOA and PBS due to federal defunding weakened public and international broadcasting capacity, making independent news more fragile relative to partisan or state-aligned outlets. (30 Aug 2025; 3 Sep 2025; 4 Sep 2025)

2. White House issued a Labor Day statement vastly overstating tariff revenues. Claiming tariffs generated \$8 trillion when experts estimate about \$115 billion spread economic misinformation, obscuring policy costs and hindering informed public debate. (31 Aug 2025)

3. House Oversight Committee released over 33,000 pages of Epstein-related documents with little new information. Publishing mostly already-public Epstein records while resisting fuller disclosure allowed leaders to claim transparency without meaningfully exposing elite networks tied to the scandal. (2 Sep 2025; 3 Sep 2025)

4. Department of Justice official was recorded discussing redacting Republicans from Epstein files and easing Ghislaine Maxwell's conditions. Comments about shielding Republicans in Epstein records and offering Maxwell better treatment suggested political curation of sensitive information to protect powerful figures. (3 Sep 2025; 4 Sep 2025; 5 Sep 2025)

5. Former CDC director Susan Monarez warned that antivaccine rhetoric was being forced into CDC advisory processes. Monarez's account that she was told to preapprove antivaccine talking points for advisory panels showed how political appointees were reshaping scientific communication inside a key health agency. (4 Sep 2025)

6. House Republicans established a new subcommittee to reinvestigate the January 6 attack. Creating a new Jan. 6 panel after a prior bipartisan

investigation enabled majority leaders to reframe the insurrection narrative, potentially downplaying threats to democratic transfer of power. (3 Sep 2025)

7. The Trump Administration and RFK Jr. promoted narratives questioning vaccine safety while cutting mRNA research. Public testimony and funding decisions that cast doubt on vaccines while dismantling research infrastructure risked embedding disinformation into official health policy. (3 Sep 2025; 4 Sep 2025; 5 Sep 2025)

8. Outlets and lawmakers pressed for full release of Epstein files via discharge petitions and public campaigns. Bipartisan pushes and media coverage demanding unredacted Epstein records sought to counter selective disclosure and ensure the public can scrutinize elite wrongdoing. (31 Aug 2025; 1 Sep 2025; 2 Sep 2025; 3 Sep 2025; 4 Sep 2025)

9. U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services banned voter registration drives at naturalization ceremonies. Blocking civic groups from registering new citizens at ceremonies limited a traditional channel for integrating immigrants into electoral participation and civic life. (2 Sep 2025)

10. The Trump Administration used overlapping crises and announcements across trade, military, immigration, and health. Simultaneous tariff fights, military strikes, immigration crackdowns, and health-policy shocks created a fragmented information environment that makes sustained public scrutiny of any single issue harder. (30 Aug 2025; 31 Aug 2025; 2 Sep 2025; 3 Sep 2025; 4 Sep 2025; 5 Sep 2025)

11. Congress enacted the Homebuyers Privacy Protection Act. New statutory protections for homebuyers' personal data in real estate transactions strengthened privacy rights and limited misuse of sensitive financial information. (5 Sep 2025)



## **CHAPTER 8**

### **WEEK 34 (6 SEP 2025 – 12 SEP 2025): MILITARY GOVERNANCE AS ROUTINE**

*National Guard deployments, paramilitary immigration raids, and curated memory deepen an order where opposition persists but carries rising personal and civic cost.*

This week witnesses a swift consolidation of executive and security powers, with immigration and urban crime cited as justifications for militarized federal interventions in Democratic-led areas. The Supreme Court's shadow docket approving racial profiling and expanding presidential authority over independent agencies further undermines the rule of law and judicial independence. Congress largely acts as a facilitator—passing harsh immigration laws, slashing D.C.'s budget, and lowering confirmation thresholds—while refusing to check unilateral military actions, foreign aid reductions, and broad tariff policies. Civil liberties face pressure from multiple fronts: ICE raids and National Guard deployments in cities, the dismantling of a 40-year White House peace vigil, politicized prosecutions and campus disciplinary actions following Kirk's assassination, and coordinated efforts to punish online dissent. Meanwhile, social and economic policies shift toward ideological objectives: Christian nationalist school policies, cuts to disability and minority-serving education, reductions in science and reproductive health programs, and rollback of climate and solar initiatives. There are pockets of resistance—state-level social programs, court rulings protecting some civil servants and immigrant services, and large protests—but overall, the structural pressures strongly lean toward authoritarian tendencies in policing, courts, federalism, and information control.

## Power and Authority

1. President Donald Trump signed an order to rename the Department of Defense as the Department of War. Renaming the Pentagon as the Department of War signaled a more aggressive military posture and used symbolic executive power to reframe the role of the armed forces in national life. (6 Sep 2025)
2. President Donald Trump approved a covert 2019 Navy SEAL mission in North Korea without briefing congressional leaders. Authorizing a lethal covert operation in North Korea without notifying the Gang of Eight bypassed statutory oversight of intelligence activities and concentrated war-making authority in the presidency. (6 Sep 2025)
3. President Donald Trump hosted the inaugural "Rose Garden Club" event at the White House for loyal supporters. Turning the White House Rose Garden into an exclusive club for loyalists blurred lines between public property and private patronage, reinforcing a loyalty-based power network around the presidency. (6 Sep 2025; 7 Sep 2025)
4. President Donald Trump deployed approximately 2,000 National Guard troops to take temporary control of policing in Washington DC. Using National Guard troops to assume control of DC's police department shifted domestic law enforcement toward military command, weakening local self-governance and civilian control of security forces. (6 Sep 2025; 10 Sep 2025; 12 Sep 2025)
5. President Donald Trump threatened to deploy National Guard units to Chicago and Baltimore over crime. Threatening military deployments to specific Democratic-led cities over crime politicized federal force and signaled willingness to override local authority for partisan ends. (6 Sep 2025)
6. President Donald Trump announced plans to send National Guard troops and federal immigration agents to Chicago. Announcing a combined Guard and immigration surge into Chicago expanded federal coercive presence in a major city, raising risks of rights violations and federal domination of local policing. (7 Sep 2025)
7. The Trump Administration launched "Patriot 2.0" and other ICE operations targeting immigrants released from custody. Rolling out named ICE crackdowns like "Patriot 2.0" against people released from custody framed immigration enforcement as quasi-military campaigns and intensified federal pressure on sanctuary jurisdictions. (6 Sep 2025; 8 Sep 2025; 9 Sep 2025)
8. President Donald Trump ordered a military strike on a civilian boat in international waters during a drug operation. Authorizing a deadly strike on

a civilian vessel amid unresolved legal authority questions highlighted expansive, weakly checked presidential use of force beyond clear battlefields. (6 Sep 2025)

9. The Trump Administration issued an order excluding certain immigrants from federal programs including Head Start. Redefining Head Start and other services to bar some immigrants from access used executive power to narrow the social safety net along status lines, deepening a tiered system of rights. (9 Sep 2025)

10. The Trump Administration released a Make America Healthy Again report on children's health that avoided regulating pesticides and ultra-processed foods. Issuing a children's health report that sidestepped strong action on pesticides and processed foods showed executive deference to industry interests over robust public health protection. (9 Sep 2025)

11. President Donald Trump backed away from earlier promises to increase pressure on Russia over its war in Ukraine. Retreating from commitments to pressure Russia over Ukraine weakened U.S. leadership in collective security and signaled tolerance of aggression that undermines democratic allies. (6 Sep 2025)

12. The Trump Administration halted U.S. military training and infrastructure funding for Estonia, Lithuania, and Latvia. Cutting military support to vulnerable Baltic allies reduced deterrence against Russia and raised doubts about U.S. reliability within NATO. (6 Sep 2025)

13. The Trump Administration ordered the destruction of nearly \$10 million in contraceptives intended for low-income countries. Destroying donated contraceptives for poor countries overrode global health priorities with ideological aims, undermining reproductive rights and U.S. credibility in development policy. (9 Sep 2025)

14. The Trump Administration announced a surge of ICE agents into Chicago and Boston ahead of elections. Surging ICE agents into major cities in an election context risked chilling turnout in immigrant communities and illustrated how federal enforcement can be used to shape the electoral environment. (9 Sep 2025)

15. Republican congressional leaders declined to assert oversight over Trump administration strikes and spending cuts. Congressional leaders' acceptance of unilateral military actions and program cuts without robust oversight weakened the legislature's checking role and emboldened executive overreach. (9 Sep 2025)

16. Trump lawyer Cleta Mitchell suggested Trump could declare a national emergency to control federal elections. Floating a national emergency to seize control of elections signaled interest in using extraordinary

powers to override state authority and potentially manipulate electoral administration. (9 Sep 2025)

17. Governor Gavin Newsom of California announced state deployment of resources to protect sequoias amid federal inaction. California's decision to step in where federal land management lagged showed states acting as counterweights when national executive priorities neglect environmental stewardship. (10 Sep 2025)

18. Governor Maura Healey of Massachusetts moved to sharply shorten environmental reviews to speed housing construction. Accelerating environmental review for housing projects traded procedural safeguards for rapid development, illustrating how executives can compress oversight to address social needs. (10 Sep 2025)

19. Governor Michelle Lujan Grisham of New Mexico announced universal free child care statewide. Creating universal free child care expanded social rights and economic opportunity, using state executive power to broaden access to a key public good. (10 Sep 2025)

20. President Donald Trump announced plans to deploy National Guard troops to Memphis over crime. Ordering Guard deployments to Memphis despite local preference for civilian resources extended a pattern of using military forces in domestic crime policy over local objections. (11 Sep 2025)

## Institutions and Governance

1. Department of Justice opposed unsealing the names of two Jeffrey Epstein associates who received large payments. Seeking to keep Epstein-linked names sealed in court limited transparency in a major abuse case and fueled perceptions that the justice system shields powerful figures. (6 Sep 2025; 7 Sep 2025)

2. Department of Justice moved to dismiss a civil lawsuit brought by 33 Epstein survivors over federal inaction. Attempting to dismiss survivors' claims about past federal failures in the Epstein case undermined accountability for institutional negligence toward victims of elite abuse. (7 Sep 2025)

3. Department of Justice delayed responding to an Epstein-related FOIA request until November 2027. Pushing a key FOIA response on Epstein records out nearly three years impeded timely public scrutiny of government handling of a high-profile abuse network. (7 Sep 2025)

4. Department of Justice failed to follow through on promised outreach to attorneys for Epstein survivors. Not contacting survivors' lawyers despite public promises signaled a gap between official rhetoric and institutional commitment to victims in a politically sensitive case. (7 Sep 2025)

5. Department of Justice opened a criminal inquiry into Federal Reserve Governor Lisa Cook over mortgage allegations. Launching a criminal probe into a Fed governor amid partisan attacks risked weaponizing law enforcement against an independent economic policymaker. (7 Sep 2025)

6. House Speaker Mike Johnson first claimed and then retracted that Donald Trump had been an FBI informant in the Epstein case. Issuing and then walking back a claim that Trump was an FBI informant in the Epstein matter injected misinformation into oversight debates and muddied public understanding of law-enforcement records. (7 Sep 2025)

7. House Oversight Committee released documents from Jeffrey Epstein's estate including a birthday note signed by Donald Trump. Publishing Epstein estate records that referenced Trump expanded the documentary record on elite networks, supporting congressional transparency around potential conflicts and influence. (8 Sep 2025; 9 Sep 2025)

8. Republican lawmakers in Arizona filed an ethics complaint seeking expulsion and sanctions against Senator Analise Ortiz for resharing an ICE warning. Using ethics and potential criminal referrals to punish a legislator for sharing information about ICE activity threatened legislative speech and signaled retaliation against immigration-related dissent. (7 Sep 2025)

9. South Carolina Senate leadership continued to block a House-passed hate crime bill from receiving a vote. Refusing to advance a hate crime bill despite House approval and public support showed how legislative gatekeeping can stall protections against racially motivated violence. (7 Sep 2025)

10. Texas legislature and Attorney General Ken Paxton implemented school prayer law and appealed a ruling blocking mandatory Ten Commandments displays. Pushing school prayer time and Ten Commandments displays in public classrooms challenged church-state separation and used state power to privilege a particular religion in education. (7 Sep 2025)

11. U.S. Supreme Court upheld an \$83.3 million defamation verdict against Donald Trump in the E. Jean Carroll case. Affirming that presidential immunity did not shield Trump from defamation liability reinforced that officeholders remain civilly accountable for personal misconduct. (8 Sep 2025)

12. U.S. Supreme Court lifted injunctions and restraining orders limiting ICE immigration raids in Los Angeles, allowing race-based stops. Allowing ICE to resume roving patrols that consider race and language normalized racial profiling in immigration enforcement and weakened judicial protection of equal treatment. (8 Sep 2025; 9 Sep 2025; 12 Sep 2025)

13. U.S. Supreme Court allowed President Trump to fire a Biden-appointed FTC member despite ongoing litigation. Permitting Trump to

remove an FTC commissioner while her case was pending eroded statutory protections for independent regulators and strengthened presidential control over watchdog agencies. (8 Sep 2025; 9 Sep 2025)

14. federal appeals court dismissed a multistate lawsuit challenging mass firings of federal probationary employees for lack of standing. Rejecting states' challenge to sweeping probationary federal employee firings limited external checks on politicized purges of the civil service. (8 Sep 2025)

15. The Trump Administration filed an emergency appeal to freeze billions in foreign aid that courts had ordered spent. Seeking to halt congressionally appropriated foreign aid via emergency appeal advanced a strategy of using impoundment-like tactics to override legislative spending decisions. (8 Sep 2025; 9 Sep 2025)

16. U.S. Supreme Court agreed to hear Trump's appeal on the legality of sweeping global tariffs. Taking up Trump's tariff case after lower courts found he exceeded statutory authority set the stage for redefining the scope of presidential power over trade policy. (7 Sep 2025; 8 Sep 2025; 9 Sep 2025)

17. federal appeals court reinstated the Library of Congress copyright chief challenging her dismissal by Trump. Reinstating a fired Library of Congress official allowed her to contest an allegedly political dismissal, modestly reinforcing protections for nonpartisan civil servants. (10 Sep 2025)

18. federal judge temporarily blocked Trump's attempt to fire Federal Reserve Governor Lisa Cook. Enjoining the removal of a Fed governor underlined judicial willingness to defend statutory independence of monetary policymakers against executive interference. (9 Sep 2025)

19. federal judge blocked Trump administration efforts to restrict services like Head Start and clinics for undocumented immigrants. Stopping new limits on immigrant access to basic services preserved a measure of equal treatment and constrained executive attempts to weaponize social programs by status. (10 Sep 2025)

20. federal judge blocked a Trump administration subpoena for trans patients' medical records from a Boston hospital. Quashing a politically tinged subpoena for trans patients' records protected medical privacy and limited the use of federal power to target a marginalized group. (10 Sep 2025)

21. federal district court in DC allowed Trump to terminate over \$1 billion in National Science Foundation grants while litigation proceeds. Refusing to enjoin mass NSF grant cancellations let the administration proceed with large science funding cuts, weakening research capacity and disproportionately affecting underrepresented groups in STEM. (11 Sep 2025)

22. federal appeals court allowed the Trump administration to block Medicaid reimbursements to Planned Parenthood. Permitting a one-year

exclusion of Planned Parenthood from Medicaid shifted reproductive health access for low-income patients and illustrated judicial deference to ideologically driven funding restrictions. (11 Sep 2025; 12 Sep 2025)

23. federal appeals court upheld the Trump administration's authority to block Medicaid funds to Planned Parenthood in a separate ruling. A parallel appeals decision reinforcing Planned Parenthood Medicaid defunding compounded the impact on clinic viability and low-income patients' care options. (11 Sep 2025; 12 Sep 2025)

24. federal judge dismissed felony charges against 15 of Trump's 2020 fake electors in Michigan for lack of intent evidence. Throwing out fake elector charges on intent grounds limited legal accountability for efforts to overturn the 2020 election and may weaken deterrence against future schemes. (9 Sep 2025)

25. federal judge blocked Trump administration restrictions on immigrant services including Head Start and clinics. Judicial intervention to keep services open to undocumented immigrants preserved access to basic health and education supports despite exclusionary executive policy. (10 Sep 2025)

26. House of Representatives passed the Stop Illegal Entry Act imposing mandatory minimum sentences for certain reentry crimes. Adopting strict mandatory minimums for migrants who reenter and commit crimes expanded carceral responses to immigration and risked overburdening courts and prisons. (11 Sep 2025)

27. House Democrats requested an inspector general review of mortgage fraud allegations involving Fed Governor Lisa Cook. Calling for an IG review of allegations against a Fed governor sought to channel politically charged claims into formal oversight rather than partisan attacks alone. (11 Sep 2025)

28. Senate Republicans changed Senate rules to lower the vote threshold for considering presidential nominees to a simple majority. Reducing the vote threshold for nominations further weakened the filibuster's checking role and made it easier to confirm partisan or loyalist appointees. (11 Sep 2025)

29. Speaker Mike Johnson refused to implement a bipartisan law requiring a Capitol plaque honoring January 6 police defenders. Ignoring a statutory mandate to honor officers who defended the Capitol signaled selective enforcement of laws and an attempt to reshape institutional memory of the insurrection. (10 Sep 2025)

30. Representative Anna Paulina Luna and allies requested a statue of Charlie Kirk be installed in the U.S. Capitol. Proposing a Capitol statue for a polarizing activist highlighted efforts to use national commemorations to elevate partisan figures and redefine shared civic symbols. (10 Sep 2025)

31. President Donald Trump attempted to appoint a supporter of pardoning January 6 rioters as DC's top federal prosecutor. Trying to install a prosecutor sympathetic to January 6 pardons in Washington DC threatened impartial enforcement in cases involving attacks on democratic institutions. (10 Sep 2025)

32. National Archives and Records Administration invited public comment on proposed federal records disposition schedules. Seeking input on which agency records to retain or destroy supported transparent archival policy and public participation in shaping the historical record. (11 Sep 2025)

33. Federal Election Commission canceled a scheduled open meeting and scheduled a closed meeting on litigation matters. Canceling an open FEC meeting while proceeding with a closed session reduced opportunities for public oversight of the agency that polices campaign finance. (11 Sep 2025)

34. Congressional Republicans stripped \$1 billion from Washington DC's budget amid broader federal interventions in the city. Slashing DC's budget as part of a federal takeover campaign undermined the capital's fiscal autonomy and illustrated how Congress can financially discipline a disenfranchised jurisdiction. (10 Sep 2025)

35. House of Representatives held a hearing questioning vaccine science and public health policy based on an unpublished study. Elevating an unreviewed vaccine study in a congressional hearing lent institutional weight to fringe claims, risking erosion of trust in scientific expertise and health policy. (10 Sep 2025)

36. Republican lawmakers downplayed the significance of a Trump-signed note in Epstein's birthday book after its release. Dismissing newly released Epstein-related material as a hoax reflected partisan efforts to manage reputational risk rather than fully confront elite complicity. (10 Sep 2025)

37. JPMorgan Chase retroactively flagged 4,700 Epstein-related transactions totaling over \$1.1 billion as suspicious. Late suspicious-activity reports on massive Epstein-linked flows exposed serious lapses in financial oversight and raised questions about banks' roles in enabling elite abuse. (10 Sep 2025)

38. federal courts invalidated several Trump administration actions including tariffs, child deportations, and a Harvard funding cut. Striking down multiple executive initiatives reaffirmed judicial capacity to check unlawful policy moves, even as other rulings favored expanded presidential discretion. (9 Sep 2025)

## Civil Rights and Dissent

1. U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement conducted large-scale raids at a Hyundai-LG battery plant in Georgia detaining about 475 workers. Mass detentions of mostly South Korean workers at a major factory highlighted how immigration enforcement can disrupt labor rights, economic projects, and diplomatic relations. (6 Sep 2025; 7 Sep 2025; 10 Sep 2025; 12 Sep 2025)
2. U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement raided a New York food manufacturing facility near Syracuse detaining over 40 workers. An ICE raid that separated parents from children underscored the human costs of aggressive enforcement and its chilling effect on immigrant communities. (6 Sep 2025)
3. The Trump Administration launched "Operation Midway Blitz" targeting undocumented immigrants in Chicago and surrounding areas. Branding a Chicago immigration crackdown with martial rhetoric and focusing on sanctuary areas intensified fear among immigrants and framed local protections as security threats. (8 Sep 2025; 10 Sep 2025; 12 Sep 2025)
4. U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement detained a Korean worker with a valid visa during the Hyundai raid and pressured him to accept departure. Detaining and coercing a legal visa holder during a mass raid showed how aggressive tactics can sweep in lawful residents and erode trust in due process. (10 Sep 2025)
5. U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement officers shot and killed Silverio Villegas-Gonzalez during a vehicle stop near Chicago. An ICE traffic stop that ended in a fatal shooting of an undocumented man intensified concerns about excessive force and accountability in federal immigration policing. (12 Sep 2025)
6. The Trump Administration built a national voting database through the Justice Department. Creating a centralized voter database raised fears that sensitive information could be used to challenge registrations or target communities, affecting electoral participation. (8 Sep 2025)
7. Missouri legislature approved a congressional map expected to give Republicans an additional seat and eliminate a Kansas City Democratic district. Redrawing Missouri's map to dismantle a minority-heavy Democratic district entrenched partisan advantage and diluted representation for urban and Black voters. (9 Sep 2025; 12 Sep 2025)
8. Florida Surgeon General Joseph Ladapo announced Florida would abandon mandatory childhood vaccination requirements. Dropping mandatory childhood vaccines in Florida prioritized individual objection over

community protection, risking outbreaks and undermining science-based public health norms. (6 Sep 2025)

9. The Trump Administration health officials considered limiting COVID-19 vaccine access while linking vaccines to child deaths based on unverified reports. Planning to restrict COVID-19 vaccines using unverified harm claims threatened to erode public health protections and politicize access to life-saving medicine. (12 Sep 2025)

10. federal courts and Trump administration allowed exclusion of Planned Parenthood from Medicaid reimbursements for a year. Blocking Medicaid funds to Planned Parenthood jeopardized reproductive health access for low-income patients and used program design to constrain bodily autonomy. (11 Sep 2025; 12 Sep 2025)

11. The Trump Administration planned to propose asylum restrictions at the United Nations requiring claims in the first country entered. Seeking to tighten global asylum rules by forcing claims in first-entry countries would weaken protections for refugees and shift burdens onto frontline states. (11 Sep 2025)

12. The Trump Administration retracted false claims that Guatemalan parents had requested their deported children's return. Admitting that prior statements about deported Guatemalan children were baseless exposed official misinformation around family separations and immigrant rights. (10 Sep 2025)

13. Illinois Governor J.B. Pritzker met with immigrant community leaders to discuss protecting constitutional rights amid ICE raids. State-level engagement with immigrant advocates sought to counteract fear from federal raids and reinforce awareness of due process and civil rights. (10 Sep 2025)

14. Chicago Mayor Brandon Johnson and Evanston city officials issued statements opposing militarized immigration enforcement and warning residents about federal agents. Local leaders' warnings and opposition to ICE operations aimed to protect immigrant communities and assert municipal resistance to federal overreach. (8 Sep 2025)

15. protesters in Washington DC and Chicago demonstrated against Trump's deployment of military and federal law enforcement in cities. Large protests opposing National Guard and federal law enforcement deployments showed active civic resistance to domestic militarization of public space. (6 Sep 2025; 7 Sep 2025)

16. The Trump Administration ordered law enforcement to dismantle a 40-year White House peace vigil. Removing a decades-long anti-nuclear vigil from outside the White House curtailed a symbolic site of continuous protest and narrowed visible space for dissent near the seat of power. (8 Sep 2025)

17. National Guard and police in the UK planned extensive drone use and airspace restrictions around Trump's state visit to Windsor. Heavy surveillance and airspace limits for Trump's UK visit balanced security with protest rights but also illustrated how high-profile leaders can trigger exceptional control of public space. (8 Sep 2025)
18. National Guard officers criticized Trump's federal law enforcement takeover of DC in internal documents. Guard documents warning that DC's federal takeover leveraged fear and divided citizens from the military revealed internal unease about domestic militarization. (10 Sep 2025)
19. Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth delivered a political and religious speech to troops in uniform praising Charlie Kirk and leading prayer. Using an official address to mix partisan and religious messaging to troops violated norms of an apolitical military and risked pressuring service members' beliefs. (10 Sep 2025)
20. West Point leadership canceled an award ceremony honoring Tom Hanks after political pressure. Scrapping a military academy honor for a perceived political critic showed how partisan pressure can shape which voices are celebrated in public institutions. (6 Sep 2025)
21. MAGA-aligned influencers organized campaigns to identify and get critics of Charlie Kirk fired for social media posts. Coordinated efforts to pressure employers to fire people over online criticism of a political figure weaponized social media to chill speech and punish dissent. (10 Sep 2025)
22. Representative Clay Higgins called for lifetime social media bans and other sanctions on people who belittled Charlie Kirk's assassination. Threatening to use congressional power to impose lifetime online bans and target licenses for speech about a political killing signaled willingness to criminalize or punish expression. (10 Sep 2025)
23. Texas Tech University and local authorities arrested and expelled a student for mocking Charlie Kirk's death online. Arresting and expelling a student over offensive comments about a political figure's death blurred the line between protected speech and punishable conduct in academic settings. (12 Sep 2025)
24. Israeli soldiers and citizens protested their government's actions in Gaza as participation in genocide. Internal protests within Israel against Gaza operations highlighted civil society's role in challenging state violence and advocating for human rights. (12 Sep 2025)
25. former President George W. Bush reflected on post-9/11 democratic challenges including voter suppression and gerrymandering. Bush's remarks linking the 9/11 era to later voter suppression and gerrymandering framed these practices as long-term threats to democratic participation. (12 Sep 2025)

26. House of Representatives passed the Stop Illegal Entry Act imposing mandatory prison terms for certain immigration reentry offenses. Mandating long prison terms for migrants who reenter and commit crimes risked mass incarceration of noncitizens and further criminalized migration. (11 Sep 2025)

27. The Trump Administration planned to link COVID-19 vaccines to child deaths using unverified reports as it considered limiting access. Using unverified adverse reports to justify restricting vaccines threatened to undermine public health protections and politicize life-saving interventions. (12 Sep 2025)

## Economic Structure

1. Bureau of Labor Statistics released a weak August jobs report following leadership turmoil and a website outage. Publishing a poor jobs report amid the firing of the BLS director and technical disruptions raised concerns that political interference could undermine confidence in official economic data. (6 Sep 2025)

2. President Donald Trump publicly downplayed current job numbers while promising future gains from construction projects. Minimizing disappointing employment figures and emphasizing speculative future growth risked substituting political messaging for candid economic assessment. (6 Sep 2025)

3. The Trump Administration ended a tariff exemption for low-cost imports, causing an 80% plunge in postal traffic into the U.S. Removing tariff exemptions for small imports disrupted international postal commerce and highlighted how trade policy shifts can abruptly reshape global economic flows. (6 Sep 2025)

4. Federal Communications Commission adopted a regulatory fee schedule to collect \$390 million for FY 2025. Setting annual regulatory fees ensured the FCC's operations are funded by regulated entities, shaping the cost structure of participation in communications markets. (8 Sep 2025)

5. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention sought public comment on continued data collection about tobacco and smokeless tobacco ingredients. Maintaining detailed ingredient reporting for tobacco products supported evidence-based regulation of harmful substances and informed public health policy. (9 Sep 2025)

6. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention submitted information collection requests on sudden death in the young and tuberculosis testing programs. Extending surveillance on sudden deaths and TB drug suscepti-

bility strengthened the data backbone for targeting health resources and evaluating lab performance. (9 Sep 2025)

7. Food and Drug Administration issued multiple final guidances on biosimilars, clinical practice, and bioequivalence standards. Updating guidance on biosimilars, clinical trials, and bioequivalence clarified regulatory expectations, influencing drug development costs, competition, and patient safety. (9 Sep 2025)

8. Food and Drug Administration released draft guidance on developing non-opioid analgesics for chronic pain. Encouraging non-opioid pain treatments aimed to shift pharmaceutical innovation toward safer options, with implications for addiction, prescribing, and health spending. (11 Sep 2025)

9. Food and Drug Administration advanced guidance on alternative tools for assessing drug manufacturing facilities. Allowing remote and alternative facility assessments preserved regulatory oversight while increasing flexibility, affecting how quickly new drugs can reach the market. (12 Sep 2025)

10. Federal Communications Commission sought public comment on several information collections affecting carriers and auctions. Reviewing data collection burdens for ex parte filings, carriers, and auctions shaped transparency and compliance costs in telecommunications regulation. (9 Sep 2025; 10 Sep 2025; 11 Sep 2025)

11. Federal Communications Commission announced phased resumption of processing for low-power and translator TV station applications. Restarting first-come processing for small TV stations affected who can enter or expand in local broadcast markets, with implications for media diversity. (12 Sep 2025)

12. Drug Enforcement Administration received multiple applications to import or manufacture controlled substances for research and clinical trials. Processing applications to handle cannabis, psychedelics, and opioids for research balanced drug control with scientific inquiry into new therapies. (8 Sep 2025; 11 Sep 2025; 12 Sep 2025)

13. Occupational Safety and Health Administration extended and sought comment on information collections for chemical standards, testing programs, and student data. Maintaining data requirements for hazardous chemicals, testing standards, and training supported workplace safety oversight while imposing reporting duties on employers and institutions. (12 Sep 2025)

14. Environmental Protection Agency approved multiple state environmental program revisions and published new chemical submissions and EIS notices. Approving state air and waste programs and disclosing new chemical

reviews and impact statements shaped how environmental rules are enforced and how industry projects proceed. (11 Sep 2025; 12 Sep 2025)

15. Census Bureau sought comment on extending the Automated Export System Program information collection. Reviewing export data reporting requirements affected the quality of trade statistics that inform economic and foreign policy decisions. (11 Sep 2025)

16. North Carolina General Assembly failed to pass a full budget, creating a \$319 million Medicaid shortfall. Legislative inaction that underfunded Medicaid forced immediate cuts to health coverage for millions, shifting fiscal risk onto vulnerable residents. (12 Sep 2025)

17. The Trump Administration Environmental Protection Agency moved to claw back \$7 billion in Solar for All grants for low- and middle-income families. Attempting to rescind solar grants for disadvantaged households undermined climate and equity goals, favoring incumbent energy interests over distributed clean power. (12 Sep 2025)

18. The Trump Administration Environmental Protection Agency announced plans to end the greenhouse gas reporting program for major polluters. Ending mandatory emissions reporting would obscure data needed for climate policy and weaken accountability for large polluters. (12 Sep 2025)

19. The Trump Administration Education Department cut funding for disability programs serving students with hearing and vision loss. Defunding disability education programs reduced support for students with sensory impairments and reflected ideological opposition to diversity-related initiatives. (10 Sep 2025)

20. The Trump Administration withheld \$350 million in grants from colleges serving students of color. Reallocation funds away from minority-serving institutions curtailed resources for students of color and deepened racial inequities in higher education access. (10 Sep 2025)

21. Republican tax and spending plan authors shifted federal responsibilities onto states, prompting budget cuts in places like Maryland. Federal fiscal changes that forced states to cut services effectively devolved costs while preserving central policy control, straining state capacity to deliver public goods. (10 Sep 2025)

## Information, Memory, and Manipulation

1. Department of Defense deleted a video that falsely implied Pete Hegseth received a Bronze Star for valor. Removing a misleading award video after criticism showed both the military's willingness to promote embellished narratives and the corrective role of outside scrutiny. (6 Sep 2025)

2. President Donald Trump posted an AI-generated militaristic image threatening Chicago on social media. Sharing an AI image suggesting military action against a U.S. city normalized violent presidential rhetoric and used synthetic media to intimidate a domestic jurisdiction. (6 Sep 2025; 7 Sep 2025)
3. Tom Homan, Trump's border czar claimed without evidence that immigration protesters were being paid and threatened legal action against funders. Baselessly portraying protesters as paid operatives delegitimized grassroots dissent and framed opposition as orchestrated subversion. (7 Sep 2025)
4. Director of National Intelligence Tulsi Gabbard ordered the NSA to recall a classified report on Venezuela despite staff affirming its accuracy. Recalling an intelligence report that documented sensitive conversations raised concerns that political considerations were overriding analytic integrity and record-keeping. (8 Sep 2025)
5. House Oversight Committee released Epstein estate records including a Trump-signed birthday note. Publishing estate documents expanded the evidentiary record on elite social networks, countering tendencies to obscure connections in high-profile abuse cases. (8 Sep 2025; 9 Sep 2025)
6. National Archives and Records Administration sought public comment on proposed federal records schedules. Inviting feedback on which records agencies may destroy or retain gave the public a voice in shaping the documentary basis for future accountability and history. (11 Sep 2025)
7. The Trump Administration planned a national voting database raising privacy and misuse concerns. Building a centralized voter file under DOJ control risked enabling data-driven targeting of voters and challenges to registrations under partisan direction. (8 Sep 2025)
8. MSNBC leadership fired commentator Matthew Dowd after his on-air criticism of Charlie Kirk's rhetoric. Dismissing a commentator following backlash over criticism of a right-wing figure illustrated how media outlets may self-censor under political pressure. (10 Sep 2025)
9. Representative Clay Higgins proposed using congressional authority to impose lifetime social media bans on critics of Charlie Kirk. Threatening government-enforced social media bans for speech about a political killing exemplified attempts to regulate online discourse in favor of regime-aligned narratives. (10 Sep 2025)
10. President Donald Trump politicized the killing of a Ukrainian refugee in North Carolina to attack cashless bail and Democrats. Using an individual crime to blame political opponents and promote a Senate candidate turned a tragedy into a partisan narrative tool. (10 Sep 2025)

11. President Donald Trump blamed the "radical left" for Charlie Kirk's shooting in a national address and subsequent statements. Framing a political assassination as the fault of a broad ideological enemy escalated polarizing rhetoric and cast opponents as inherently violent. (11 Sep 2025)

12. FBI Director Kash Patel handled public communications on the Charlie Kirk murder investigation in a way that drew criticism. Confusing and performative updates on a high-profile murder case undermined confidence in the FBI's professionalism and nonpartisan posture. (11 Sep 2025)

13. Federal Communications Commission sought public comment on multiple information collection practices under the Paperwork Reduction Act. Reviewing how it gathers and discloses information affected transparency and the public's ability to monitor regulatory decision-making in communications. (9 Sep 2025; 10 Sep 2025; 11 Sep 2025)

14. Food and Drug Administration announced a Digital Health Advisory Committee meeting on generative AI mental health devices. Confronting AI-enabled mental health tools in a public advisory meeting acknowledged the need to regulate algorithmic systems that can shape sensitive health decisions. (12 Sep 2025)

15. The Trump Administration planned to link COVID-19 vaccines to child deaths using unverified reports while considering access limits. Promoting unverified vaccine harms to justify restrictions risked spreading disinformation that could weaken trust in public health institutions. (12 Sep 2025)

16. The Trump Administration used the Maha children's health report to emphasize some risks while avoiding strong regulation of pesticides and processed foods. Highlighting certain health concerns while sidestepping powerful industries' products shaped public understanding without matching it with robust regulatory action. (9 Sep 2025)

17. The Trump Administration delayed and limited disclosure of Epstein-related information through FOIA and court positions. Combined secrecy moves around Epstein records and associates' names constrained the public's ability to fully understand elite wrongdoing and institutional failures. (6 Sep 2025; 7 Sep 2025; 10 Sep 2025)

18. President Donald Trump downplayed Russian drone incursions into Polish airspace as possibly accidental. Minimizing a NATO ally's airspace violation contrasted with Polish alarm and signaled a narrative that soft-pedaled adversary aggression. (11 Sep 2025)

19. Charlie Kirk and allied organizers spread nationalist and conspiratorial messages in speeches in Tokyo and Seoul. Exporting MAGA-style

rhetoric about cultural replacement and stolen elections to Japan and South Korea helped seed far-right narratives in other democracies. (11 Sep 2025)

20. The Trump Administration ended a long-running greenhouse gas reporting program for major emitters. Eliminating emissions reporting would obscure key climate data, hindering public and scientific ability to track corporate pollution and policy effectiveness. (12 Sep 2025)

21. The Trump Administration and congressional allies curated public honors and symbols around Charlie Kirk while resisting recognition of January 6 defenders. Promising a Medal of Freedom for Kirk and blocking a plaque for Capitol defenders showed selective elevation of allies and erasure of inconvenient defenders of democracy. (10 Sep 2025)



## CHAPTER 9

# WEEK 35 (13 SEP 2025 – 19 SEP 2025): SECURITY AS PRESIDENTIAL CLAY

*National Guard deployments, immigration raids, and curated memory showed how ordinary tools of government were reshaped around one man's fears and advantage.*

This week reveals a swift consolidation of executive power and a clear shift toward authoritarianism across multiple areas. The Trump administration used emergency rhetoric, military deployments, and immigration crackdowns to bypass local authorities (Memphis, DC, Camp 57), while openly defying legal and judicial limits (TikTok delay, Lisa Cook removal efforts, tariff litigation). The law is increasingly being weaponized: RICO threats against protesters, politicized prosecutions and dismissals (Maurene Comey, Erik Siebert, Letitia James pressure), and Supreme Court-approved warrantless immigration raids. Meanwhile, the information environment faced a coordinated assault: FCC threats and corporate compliance silenced Jimmy Kimmel; DOJ removed research on far-right violence; national parks removed slavery exhibits; and senior officials spread disinformation about elections and violence. Public health and science oversight were dismantled through RFK Jr's purge of vaccine advisory bodies, CDC leadership dismissals, and EPA's move to rescind the endangerment finding. Immigration and citizenship policies became more stratified, enforcing strict measures, solitary confinement, child detention abuses, TPS disputes, and a new pay-to-enter "Gold Card" visa. Some resistance remains—courts blocking some deportations and Cook's firing, congressional investigations, and state-level vaccine guidance—but overall, the trend favors deepening authoritarian control.

## Power and Authority

1. Florida Surgeon General Joseph Ladapo and the Florida administration ended childhood vaccine mandates for multiple preventable diseases. Florida eliminated school vaccine mandates for diseases like measles and polio, weakening collective protections for children and shifting core public health decisions toward ideological executive discretion. (13 Sep 2025)

2. President Trump ordered flags at half-mast and awarded a posthumous Medal of Freedom for Charlie Kirk. Trump used national symbols and the highest civilian honor to elevate a partisan activist, reinforcing a cult of personality and blurring lines between state commemoration and factional loyalty. (13 Sep 2025)

3. President Trump requested an additional \$58 million from Congress for executive and judicial security after Charlie Kirk's killing. The administration sought expanded protection for top officials in response to political violence, potentially entrenching a security bubble around elites while broader democratic vulnerabilities remain unaddressed. (13 Sep 2025; 14 Sep 2025)

4. President Trump threatened to declare a national emergency to seize control of Washington DC's police over immigration enforcement. Trump's threat to federalize DC policing to compel cooperation with mass deportations leveraged emergency powers against local autonomy, eroding checks on centralized executive control. (15 Sep 2025)

5. President Trump signed an executive order deploying National Guard troops and a multi-agency task force to Memphis. The Memphis Safe Task Force embedded federal agents and Guard troops in local crime control, normalizing military-style federal intervention in city governance beyond clear emergency conditions. (15 Sep 2025)

6. President Trump publicly questioned First Amendment protection for hate speech. By suggesting hate speech may not be constitutionally protected, Trump signaled openness to broader state control over expression, undermining settled free speech norms that constrain government power. (15 Sep 2025)

7. President Trump threatened to withhold federal funding from New York City if Zohran Mamdani is elected mayor. Trump's threat to punish New York City financially over a local electoral outcome weaponized federal resources against disfavored political choices, pressuring voters and state leaders. (15 Sep 2025)

8. President Trump ordered construction of a new 27-mile border wall segment in Arizona's San Rafael Valley. The administration advanced a major border wall project through a sensitive ecosystem, prioritizing hardline

border control and executive security framing over environmental and local concerns. (15 Sep 2025)

9. Secretary of State Marco Rubio pledged to revoke visas of people who celebrated Charlie Kirk's killing. Rubio's vow to strip visas based on political expression tied immigration status to ideological conformity, extending executive power over noncitizens into the realm of speech policing. (15 Sep 2025)

10. President Trump overturned ICE "sensitive locations" protections for hospitals and schools. By ending limits on immigration enforcement in hospitals and schools, the administration expanded coercive reach into essential public spaces, chilling access to care and education for immigrant communities. (16 Sep 2025)

11. President Trump extended the federal TikTok enforcement delay despite statutory and judicial mandates. Trump's order to postpone TikTok enforcement in defiance of Congress and a Supreme Court ruling highlighted executive willingness to selectively ignore legal constraints on favored platforms. (16 Sep 2025)

12. President Trump announced military strikes on a Venezuelan drug boat without congressional authorization. Unilateral strikes in international waters, touted without evidence, underscored the president's use of lethal force abroad absent clear oversight, stretching war powers norms. (15 Sep 2025; 17 Sep 2025)

13. President Trump announced efforts to retake Afghanistan's Bagram airbase from the Taliban. Trump's push to reoccupy Bagram signaled a renewed, executive-driven military footprint in a volatile region, with strategic decisions framed around great-power rivalry rather than legislative debate. (18 Sep 2025)

14. President Trump ordered a temporary federal takeover of the Washington DC police department using National Guard and federal agents. The 30-day federal seizure of DC policing authority, justified by disputed crime claims, set a precedent for overriding local self-governance through security narratives. (19 Sep 2025)

15. President Trump announced plans for a \$200 million White House ballroom project. The decision to build a lavish new White House ballroom raised questions about using public funds and symbolic space for presidential aggrandizement rather than public needs. (17 Sep 2025)

16. President Trump designated ANTIFA as a major terrorist organization and urged investigations of its funders. Trump's legally unsupported terrorism designation for a domestic protest tendency framed political opposition as a security threat, inviting expanded surveillance and repression of dissent. (17 Sep 2025; 18 Sep 2025; 19 Sep 2025)

17. President Trump issued the Gold Card executive order creating a pay-to-immigrate visa program. The Gold Card program tied expedited immigrant visas to million-dollar “gifts,” formalizing a pathway where wealth directly purchases legal status and access to the United States. (19 Sep 2025)

18. President Trump publicly praised ABC for suspending Jimmy Kimmel after critical comments. Trump’s celebration of Kimmel’s suspension reinforced a climate where media outlets are rewarded or punished based on personal loyalty to the president, pressuring editorial independence. (18 Sep 2025)

## Institutions and Governance

1. Senator Lindsey Graham and Representative Brian Fitzpatrick launched a bipartisan push to attach Russia sanctions to a government funding bill. Lawmakers sought to embed strong Russia sanctions into a must-pass continuing resolution, using congressional power of the purse to shape foreign policy and constrain executive discretion. (13 Sep 2025)

2. Fulton County Superior Court Judge Kevin Farmer dismissed RICO conspiracy charges against Cop City protesters for lack of proper authority. The court threw out sweeping RICO charges after finding the attorney general lacked required gubernatorial authorization, reinforcing procedural limits on criminalizing protest movements. (13 Sep 2025)

3. Brazilian Supreme Court convicted former president Jair Bolsonaro of plotting a coup and sentenced him to prison. Brazil’s high court imposed a 27-year sentence on Bolsonaro for coup plotting, demonstrating judicial willingness to hold ex-executives accountable for attacks on electoral outcomes. (13 Sep 2025)

4. The Trump Administration pressed the Supreme Court to overturn a ruling that found its global tariffs illegal. The administration lobbied the Court to restore contested tariffs, testing judicial limits on unilateral economic powers claimed under emergency statutes. (13 Sep 2025; 18 Sep 2025)

5. Supreme Court of the United States allowed warrantless immigration raids targeting people based on appearance and other proxies. By lifting a restraining order and permitting warrantless raids, the Court expanded federal enforcement latitude at the expense of due process and equal protection for immigrants. (14 Sep 2025)

6. Missouri legislature approved a mid-decade congressional gerrymander to flip a Democratic seat. Missouri lawmakers redrew districts mid-cycle to convert a Democratic seat to Republican control, using redis-

tricting power to entrench partisan advantage over voter preferences. (14 Sep 2025)

7. Senator Elizabeth Warren and Representative Steve Cohen introduced legislation to ban employer credit checks in hiring. The bill sought to curb the use of credit histories in employment decisions, addressing structural barriers that disproportionately harm women and minorities in the labor market. (15 Sep 2025)

8. Texas legislature enacted Senate Bill 17 restricting real estate purchases by certain foreign nationals. Texas barred many Chinese, Iranian, Russian, and North Korean nationals from buying most property, prompting legal challenges over discrimination and conflicts with federal authority on foreign investment. (15 Sep 2025)

9. House Judiciary Committee scheduled an FBI oversight hearing with Director Kash Patel. The committee moved to question FBI leadership amid concerns about politicization and investigative missteps, exercising legislative oversight over federal law enforcement. (15 Sep 2025; 17 Sep 2025)

10. Senate Judiciary Committee grilled FBI Director Kash Patel over reassigning agents from domestic terrorism to immigration. Senators challenged Patel on shifting FBI resources away from domestic extremism, highlighting how allocation decisions can weaken core security functions and accountability. (15 Sep 2025; 16 Sep 2025)

11. Representative Nancy Mace filed a resolution to censure Rep. Ilhan Omar and remove her from committees based on false claims. The censure bid used unsubstantiated accusations about Omar's comments on Charlie Kirk to weaponize House discipline procedures against a political opponent. (15 Sep 2025)

12. Center for Human Rights and Constitutional Law and partner groups filed a court complaint alleging abusive conditions at ICE's Dilley family detention center. Advocates asked a federal court to enforce Flores standards at a large family facility, documenting prolonged detention and neglect that test legal limits on child custody conditions. (15 Sep 2025)

13. Maurene Comey sued the Trump Justice Department over her firing as a federal prosecutor. Comey's lawsuit alleged unconstitutional, retaliatory removal tied to her father's history with Trump, challenging presidential claims of unfettered power over career prosecutors. (15 Sep 2025)

14. U.S. Court of Appeals for the D.C. Circuit blocked President Trump's attempt to fire Federal Reserve Governor Lisa Cook. The appeals court preserved Cook's position, reinforcing the Fed's structural independence against unprecedented presidential efforts to remove a sitting governor. (15 Sep 2025; 16 Sep 2025)

15. Federal appeals court criticized deportations of protected men to Ghana but found itself unable to intervene post-removal. A judge condemned the administration's deportation of men with immigration protections, illustrating how rapid executive actions can outpace judicial remedies and weaken due process. (15 Sep 2025)

16. Pentagon Inspector General completed a review of Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth's use of Signal to share sensitive plans. The IG's report on unauthorized disclosures to non-officials highlighted internal oversight of national security decision-making and potential breaches of classification norms. (15 Sep 2025)

17. President Trump filed a \$15 billion defamation lawsuit against the New York Times and related defendants. Trump's massive libel suit against a major newspaper and authors sought to punish critical reporting through civil courts, testing protections for investigative journalism. (15 Sep 2025; 16 Sep 2025; 17 Sep 2025)

18. Georgia Supreme Court declined to hear Fani Willis's appeal of her disqualification from the Trump RICO case. By leaving Willis's removal in place, the court prolonged uncertainty over prosecution of a major election interference case, delaying accountability for alleged 2020-related crimes. (16 Sep 2025)

19. Youth climate activists represented by Our Children's Trust challenged three pro-fossil-fuel Trump executive orders in federal court. Young plaintiffs argued that energy emergency orders unlawfully endanger citizens and exceed executive authority, using litigation to contest climate policy as a constitutional harm. (16 Sep 2025)

20. Senate Environment and Public Works Committee opened an investigation into industry lobbying behind EPA's move to rescind the endangerment finding. Senators sought records from oil companies and think tanks to probe whether corporate pressure drove efforts to dismantle the legal basis for federal climate regulation. (16 Sep 2025)

21. Representative Brian Mast withdrew a proposal that would have let the Secretary of State revoke passports over alleged terrorism support. Facing civil liberties concerns, Mast moved to strip a broad passport-revocation power from State Department legislation, averting a tool that could have targeted activists and dissidents. (16 Sep 2025)

22. House of Representatives passed a bill allowing DC minors as young as 14 to be tried as adults for serious crimes. The House advanced legislation tightening juvenile justice in DC and curbing judicial discretion, asserting congressional control over local criminal policy in the federal district. (16 Sep 2025)

23. Trump Department of Justice sued Vermont to invalidate its Climate Superfund Act requiring polluters to pay for climate harms. DOJ sought to strike down state laws making fossil fuel companies fund climate damage, aligning federal litigation with industry interests against state-level accountability experiments. (17 Sep 2025)
24. Utah prosecutors and grand jury indicted Tyler Robinson on aggravated murder and related counts for killing Charlie Kirk. The indictment on capital charges formalized state prosecution of a high-profile political killing, raising questions about the use of the death penalty in politically charged cases. (17 Sep 2025)
25. Federal judge Steven Merryday dismissed Trump's \$15 billion defamation lawsuit against the New York Times as procedurally deficient. The court rejected Trump's sweeping libel complaint for failing basic pleading standards, signaling judicial resistance to using civil courts as blunt instruments against the press. (18 Sep 2025; 19 Sep 2025)
26. Federal judge Timothy Kelly blocked deportation of Guatemalan children with active immigration cases. Kelly halted removal of unaccompanied minors after finding the administration's claims about parental wishes unsubstantiated, reinforcing judicial checks on rushed deportations of vulnerable children. (18 Sep 2025)
27. Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals upheld temporary protected status for 600,000 Venezuelans against Trump administration efforts to end it. The appeals court preserved TPS protections by ruling the homeland security secretary lacked authority to terminate the program, constraining executive power over mass deportation. (18 Sep 2025)
28. Immigration judge in Louisiana ordered Mahmoud Khalil deported for misrepresentation on his green card application. The deportation order against a pro-Palestinian activist for alleged form misstatements, despite a federal stay, illustrated how immigration courts can be used against politically active residents. (17 Sep 2025; 18 Sep 2025)
29. Federal judge ordered improvements to harsh immigrant detention conditions in a Manhattan federal building. Finding likely First and Fifth Amendment violations, the court mandated better conditions for detainees, underscoring judicial oversight of civil detention practices. (17 Sep 2025)
30. Federal judge ordered Rudy Giuliani to pay over \$1.3 million in legal fees related to 2020 election litigation. The fee award penalized Giuliani for unpaid legal bills tied to his efforts to overturn the 2020 election, reinforcing financial accountability for actors in anti-democratic schemes. (17 Sep 2025)
31. Federal appeals court ordered deportation of Atlanta journalist Mario Guevara despite prior bond and residency path. The appellate decision to

depot a reporter known for immigration coverage, amid claims of retaliation, raised alarms about judicial complicity in chilling investigative journalism. (19 Sep 2025)

32. House Republicans proposed 14 bills imposing tough-on-crime policies on Washington DC. The legislative package sought to override DC's local authority on criminal justice, using Congress's unique power over the district to impose partisan crime policy. (19 Sep 2025)

33. House of Representatives passed a resolution honoring Charlie Kirk and condemning political violence. The symbolic resolution, backed mostly by Republicans but dividing Democrats, used congressional floor time to canonize a polarizing activist, reflecting partisan memory politics. (19 Sep 2025)

34. House Republicans advanced NDAA provisions to delay PFAS foam bans and cut cleanup funding. Defense bill riders would slow the military's transition away from toxic PFAS foams and reduce cleanup budgets, privileging short-term operational convenience over long-term health protections. (19 Sep 2025)

35. House of Representatives passed a short-term government funding bill largely along party lines. The House approved a seven-week stopgap funding measure without Democratic input, setting up a Senate clash and heightening shutdown risk over unresolved policy disputes. (18 Sep 2025)

36. U.S. Senate blocked the House-passed funding bill over healthcare program cuts. Senate Democrats rejected the House CR for failing to protect Medicaid and other health programs, using budget leverage to resist executive-backed austerity. (19 Sep 2025)

37. Senator Chris Murphy and Representative Jason Crow announced plans for legislation protecting anti-government speech from censorship. In response to Kimmel's suspension and regulatory threats, lawmakers proposed statutory defenses for politically targeted speakers, aiming to bolster First Amendment safeguards. (19 Sep 2025)

38. House Democratic leaders demanded FCC Chair Brendan Carr's resignation over alleged abuse of power against ABC. Democrats accused Carr of coercing ABC through licensing threats to punish Jimmy Kimmel, signaling congressional readiness to investigate regulatory retaliation against media. (18 Sep 2025; 19 Sep 2025)

39. House Democrats launched an investigation into ABC, Sinclair, and the FCC over Jimmy Kimmel's suspension. The inquiry aimed to uncover whether political intimidation and regulatory leverage drove programming decisions, probing institutional safeguards for media independence. (17 Sep 2025; 18 Sep 2025)

40. House Judiciary Committee Democrats failed in an attempt to subpoena FCC Chair Brendan Carr during a hearing. Ro Khanna's unsuccessful subpoena effort underscored partisan gridlock over holding a key regulator accountable for perceived censorship-related abuses. (19 Sep 2025)

41. Federal Election Commission canceled two open public meetings scheduled for November 2025. The FEC's cancellation of planned open meetings reduced opportunities for public observation of campaign finance oversight, modestly weakening transparency in election regulation. (19 Sep 2025)

42. Environmental Protection Agency proposed rescinding the greenhouse-gas endangerment finding and cutting its research office. EPA's move to revoke the scientific basis for climate regulation and dismantle its research arm would sharply curtail the agency's capacity to protect public health from emissions. (17 Sep 2025)

43. The Trump Administration and HHS Secretary Robert F. Kennedy Jr. fired CDC Director Susan Monarez after conflicts over vaccine policy. Removing the CDC director for resisting politicized vaccine directives signaled deep encroachment of ideology into public health leadership and weakened institutional independence. (17 Sep 2025)

44. Robert F. Kennedy Jr. as HHS Secretary purged and reconstituted the CDC's Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices with new appointees. Kennedy's wholesale replacement of ACIP members with vaccine skeptics and underqualified advisers reoriented a key scientific body toward political goals, undermining evidence-based guidance. (17 Sep 2025; 18 Sep 2025)

45. President Trump issued an executive order to bring federal scientific research under tighter presidential control. The "restoring gold standard science" order centralized scrutiny of grants and targeted diversity initiatives, weakening independent peer review and inviting politicized funding decisions. (17 Sep 2025)

46. Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices reversed itself and voted to end Vaccines for Children coverage of the combined MMRV shot. ACIP's confused reversal on MMRV coverage exposed diminished expertise and stability in vaccine policymaking, risking reduced access for low-income children. (19 Sep 2025)

47. Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices voted against recommending a prescription requirement for Covid-19 vaccines. By narrowly rejecting a prescription mandate but urging individualized decisions, ACIP left Covid vaccine access more complex and potentially less routine, affecting coverage and uptake. (19 Sep 2025)

48. The Trump Administration attempted to remove Federal Reserve Governor Lisa Cook over disputed mortgage allegations. The White House's

push to oust Cook on thin fraud claims, later taken to the Supreme Court, challenged norms insulating monetary policy from partisan purges. (14 Sep 2025; 18 Sep 2025)

49. Trump Department of Labor leadership proposed nearly 150 deregulatory actions including ending wage and overtime protections for millions of care workers. The sweeping Labor agenda would strip basic protections from 3.7 million domestic workers and shrink enforcement capacity, shifting institutional priorities away from worker rights. (16 Sep 2025)

50. Department of Labor chief of staff issued a memo threatening legal consequences for employees who speak to the media about working conditions. The gag directive, at odds with labor law, sought to silence internal criticism and whistleblowing, undermining transparency within a key regulatory agency. (16 Sep 2025)

51. FEMA chief counsel resigned while urging staff to prioritize people over politics. The departure of FEMA's top lawyer, the third under Trump, pointed to mounting political pressure on disaster management professionals and potential erosion of neutral emergency governance. (15 Sep 2025)

52. Director of National Intelligence Tulsi Gabbard revoked security clearances for Joel Willett and dozens of other intelligence officials. The clearance purge targeting current and former officers, including a Senate candidate, suggested political criteria were being used to control access to classified information and sideline critics. (17 Sep 2025)

53. The Trump Administration cut \$500 million in international grants combating child and forced labor. Eliminating major overseas labor grants weakened U.S. support for global worker protections, signaling a retreat from international norms against exploitation. (16 Sep 2025)

54. House Republicans proposed an \$88 million increase in security funding for top officials in a stopgap bill. The security add-on for lawmakers, judges, and executives in a short-term funding bill highlighted how elite protection can be prioritized amid broader budget standoffs. (17 Sep 2025)

55. The Trump Administration signed a domestic spending bill cutting Medicaid and CHIP by over \$1 trillion. The "One Big, Beautiful Bill" slashed federal health entitlements, with CBO projecting over 10 million people losing coverage, reshaping the social safety net through budget law. (17 Sep 2025)

56. House Oversight Committee (minority leadership) opened an investigation into FCC and Trump administration contacts with media executives. The probe into communications around ABC's programming decisions sought to uncover whether regulators coordinated with the White House to pressure critical outlets. (17 Sep 2025)

57. House of Representatives narrowly rejected a resolution to censure Rep. Ilhan Omar over false claims. The failed censure effort showed some institutional resistance to using formal sanctions based on misinformation, though the close vote reflected ongoing vulnerability to partisan misuse. (17 Sep 2025)

58. The Trump Administration asked the Supreme Court to authorize firing Federal Reserve Governor Lisa Cook. Seeking high-court blessing to remove a Fed governor over unproven allegations escalated the confrontation over central bank independence into a constitutional test. (18 Sep 2025)

59. The Trump Administration pressured federal prosecutors to charge New York Attorney General Letitia James and moved to fire U.S. Attorney Erik Siebert when evidence was lacking. Top officials leaned on DOJ to pursue baseless mortgage fraud charges against a political adversary and ousted a U.S. attorney who resisted, undermining prosecutorial independence. (17 Sep 2025; 18 Sep 2025)

60. Federal Election Commission canceled two November 2025 open meetings under the Sunshine Act. By calling off scheduled public sessions, the FEC modestly reduced opportunities for real-time scrutiny of its decisions on campaign finance and election rules. (19 Sep 2025)

## Civil Rights and Dissent

1. Immigration and Customs Enforcement conducted militarized raids across Los Angeles targeting immigrants and perceived immigrants. ICE's masked, armed operations in LA neighborhoods, detaining even citizens, evoked past mass roundups and intensified fear in immigrant communities, chilling everyday exercise of rights. (13 Sep 2025)

2. Illinois lawmakers including Governor JB Pritzker and Rep. Delia Ramirez demanded investigation into an ICE traffic-stop killing near Chicago. State leaders called for accountability after ICE agents fatally shot Silverio Villegas-Gonzalez, spotlighting lethal force in immigration enforcement and its impact on local trust. (13 Sep 2025)

3. FBI leadership under Kash Patel and Dan Bongino faced criticism and a lawsuit alleging politicization of the Kirk shooting investigation. Concerns that loyalty to Trump trumped investigative competence at the FBI raised fears that political violence cases may be handled through a partisan lens. (13 Sep 2025)

4. ICE and DHS detained Korean workers with valid visas in a raid on a Hyundai plant and held them in poor conditions. The Georgia raid and reported mistreatment of lawful Korean workers illustrated overbroad,

quota-driven enforcement that harms legal migrants and strains international relations. (13 Sep 2025; 15 Sep 2025; 17 Sep 2025)

5. Stephen Miller as White House deputy chief of staff threatened to use law enforcement power against political opponents labeled as domestic terrorists. Miller's rhetoric about deploying state power against dissenters under a terrorism frame signaled intent to criminalize opposition rather than protect neutral public safety. (14 Sep 2025)

6. Elon Musk amplified a list of educators accused of inappropriate comments about Charlie Kirk's murder. Musk's targeting of educators contributed to suspensions and firings, demonstrating how influential actors can chill academic speech and punish perceived ideological deviation. (14 Sep 2025)

7. Utah legislature enacted HB 128 allowing open carry on college campuses for concealed-carry permit holders. The law expanded visible firearms on campuses without red-flag safeguards, reshaping the balance between Second Amendment claims and students' sense of safety in educational spaces. (14 Sep 2025)

8. The Trump Administration pursued hard-line immigration policies restricting foreign workers and student visas despite economic needs. Conflicting directives on deportations and visas created confusion for implementers and signaled that ideological goals were overriding labor market and educational considerations. (13 Sep 2025)

9. The Trump Administration used a high-profile Hyundai raid and other operations to recruit new ICE agents. Holding a career expo near the Kirk murder site and touting aggressive raids framed immigration enforcement as a prestige mission, reinforcing a punitive enforcement culture. (15 Sep 2025)

10. The Trump Administration and Attorney General Pam Bondi considered bringing RICO charges against protesters including pro-Palestinian demonstrators. Floating organized-crime statutes for protest activity threatened to transform political assembly into a prosecutable conspiracy, deterring collective action. (15 Sep 2025)

11. Justice Department sued Oregon and Maine over access to voter registration lists and ineligible voter information. The lawsuits, viewed by states as politically motivated, used federal power to pressure election administrators, potentially justifying future purges or challenges to state autonomy. (16 Sep 2025)

12. University of California sued the Trump administration over a research funding freeze and a \$1.2 billion fine on UCLA. UC alleged that civil rights laws were being twisted to punish campus speech and activism,

framing the funding actions as an attack on academic freedom and dissent. (16 Sep 2025)

13. The Trump Administration reduced federal efforts to combat human trafficking and reassigned agents to deportations. Scaling back anti-trafficking initiatives in favor of immigration enforcement deprioritized protection of vulnerable victims in favor of removal metrics. (17 Sep 2025)

14. House Republicans introduced multiple “tough on crime” bills for DC and a separate bill to try DC minors as adults. Congressional Republicans used their unique authority over DC to impose harsher criminal policies, including adult prosecution of 14-year-olds, overriding local preferences. (16 Sep 2025; 19 Sep 2025)

15. ICE and Department of Homeland Security announced that assaulting ICE officers would be prosecuted as a federal felony and broadened what counts as a threat. By treating actions like filming operations as potential threats, DHS expanded the scope of conduct that could trigger serious charges, chilling oversight and protest. (17 Sep 2025)

16. ICE dramatically increased use of solitary confinement in immigration detention under Trump’s second term. A sharp rise in solitary confinement, especially for vulnerable detainees, highlighted punitive conditions in civil detention that can amount to psychological torture. (17 Sep 2025)

17. Minneapolis Police Department cleared a homeless encampment following shootings. The encampment sweep raised concerns that public safety incidents were being used to justify displacement of unhoused people rather than address underlying housing needs. (17 Sep 2025)

18. The Trump Administration and Louisiana officials reopened Angola prison’s notorious Camp J as an ICE detention center called Camp 57. Repurposing a historically abusive prison unit for civil immigration detention blurred lines between criminal punishment and administrative custody, deepening stigma and risk for detainees. (18 Sep 2025)

19. ICE and Nassau County Correctional Center reported the in-custody death of an ICE detainee in New York. The unexplained death of a detainee in a county jail under ICE contract raised questions about medical care, oversight, and accountability in immigration detention partnerships. (19 Sep 2025)

20. U.S. law enforcement agencies including FBI and CBP used social media emojis as alleged indicators of Venezuelan gang affiliation. Reliance on dubious emoji “codes” to flag Tren de Aragua ties risked mislabeling migrants as gang members, enabling wrongful arrests or deportations based on flimsy evidence. (19 Sep 2025)

21. Department of Homeland Security agents arrested New York City and state officials while they attempted oversight of immigration courts.

Detaining elected officials engaged in oversight visits signaled hostility to democratic checks on detention conditions and immigration adjudication. (19 Sep 2025)

22. New York lawmakers and activists were arrested for blocking access to an ICE intake facility during a protest. The arrests of 71 people, including 11 elected officials, for civil disobedience at a federal building highlighted escalating conflict between local representatives and federal immigration enforcement. (19 Sep 2025)

23. Federal agents used teargas and pepper balls to disperse protesters outside a Chicago ICE facility. Riot-gear tactics against a relatively small protest, including congressional candidates, exemplified militarized responses that can deter lawful assembly and political organizing. (19 Sep 2025)

24. The Trump Administration implemented a \$100,000 annual fee on H-1B visas and created the Gold Card pay-to-immigrate program. Together, the H-1B fee and Gold Card visa entrenched a tiered immigration system privileging wealth and penalizing skilled workers, reshaping who can access U.S. opportunities. (19 Sep 2025)

25. The Trump Administration pursued aggressive deportations and detention of DACA recipients and other immigrants, prompting a congressional letter. Reports of Dreamers being detained or deported led 95 members of Congress to demand transparency and legal justification, underscoring threats to previously protected groups. (18 Sep 2025)

26. The Trump Administration deported five men to Ghana despite U.S. immigration court protections. The removals, condemned by a federal judge, showed how executive agencies can circumvent court-granted protections, undermining the reliability of legal relief for migrants. (15 Sep 2025)

27. The Trump Administration oversaw harsh conditions and alleged Flores violations at the Dilley family detention center. Prolonged child detention, poor sanitation, and inadequate medical care at a private facility highlighted systemic rights violations against immigrant families in U.S. custody. (15 Sep 2025)

28. The Trump Administration reassigned roughly 20% of FBI agents, including domestic terrorism squads, to immigration enforcement. Shifting agents away from monitoring extremist threats to focus on immigration enforcement weakened protections against domestic terrorism while intensifying surveillance of migrants. (15 Sep 2025)

29. The Trump Administration used civil rights law to threaten criminal investigation of an Office Depot employee who refused to print Kirk posters. Treating a refusal to print political imagery as a potential civil rights crime

inverted protections meant for marginalized groups into tools for compelling private speech. (15 Sep 2025)

30. The Trump Administration pursued deportation of pro-Palestinian activist Mahmoud Khalil despite a federal stay. The deportation order against Khalil, constrained only by a separate federal injunction, illustrated how activism and minor paperwork issues can be leveraged to expel legal residents. (17 Sep 2025; 18 Sep 2025)

31. The Trump Administration oversaw deportation proceedings against Atlanta journalist Mario Guevara after his protest arrest. Guevara's detention and ordered removal, seen as retaliation for immigration reporting, showed how immigration law can be used to silence critical voices lacking citizenship. (19 Sep 2025)

32. The Trump Administration expanded use of solitary confinement and reopened a notorious prison unit for ICE detainees. The combination of solitary confinement growth and Camp 57's opening at Angola signaled a punitive, carceral approach to civil immigration enforcement. (17 Sep 2025; 18 Sep 2025)

33. The Trump Administration cut Medicaid and CHIP funding, disproportionately affecting children and low-income families. Massive entitlement cuts threatened healthcare access for millions, particularly children and rural residents, deepening material inequality that shapes effective political participation. (17 Sep 2025)

34. The Trump Administration reduced international child labor and forced labor grants by \$500 million. Defunding global anti-exploitation programs weakened protections for children abroad, undermining U.S. commitments to labor rights and human dignity. (16 Sep 2025)

35. The Trump Administration reduced efforts to combat human trafficking in favor of deportation priorities. Scaling back trafficking work in favor of removal metrics left vulnerable victims with fewer protections and signaled that enforcement optics trumped human rights. (17 Sep 2025)

36. The Trump Administration oversaw abusive conditions at ICE's Dilley family detention center documented in court filings. Allegations of sleep deprivation, dirty water, and emotional abuse of children at Dilley highlighted systemic rights violations in family detention under federal contracts. (15 Sep 2025)

37. The Trump Administration pursued warrantless immigration raids and broadened definitions of threats to ICE officers. Supreme Court-enabled raids and DHS's expansive threat framing together empowered aggressive enforcement that erodes due process and chills documentation of abuses. (14 Sep 2025; 17 Sep 2025)

## Economic Structure

1. Environmental Protection Agency granted Arizona primacy over regulation of most underground injection wells. EPA's approval shifted primary enforcement of underground injection controls to Arizona, decentralizing oversight of groundwater risks while retaining limited federal authority on tribal lands. (15 Sep 2025)

2. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention sought OMB approval to continue tuberculosis program evaluation data collection. CDC's request to extend TB surveillance reporting supported ongoing monitoring of a serious disease, sustaining data infrastructure that informs public health resource allocation. (15 Sep 2025)

3. The Trump Administration and Trump family interests facilitated a UAE AI chip deal and \$2 billion investment in the Trump-linked crypto firm World Liberty Financial. The arrangement allowing advanced chips to flow to a UAE firm while channeling large investments into a Trump family business raised serious conflict-of-interest and corruption concerns. (15 Sep 2025)

4. Federal Communications Commission re-established its Technological Advisory Council for a new term. Reconstituting the TAC ensured ongoing expert input into communications policy, affecting how emerging technologies are regulated and integrated into national infrastructure. (16 Sep 2025)

5. Federal Communications Commission clarified outage reporting rules during disaster activations. The FCC's rule refined when providers can rely on DIRS instead of NORS, balancing reporting burdens with the need for timely information to protect critical communications services. (16 Sep 2025)

6. Federal Communications Commission required all domestic voice providers to block calls from do-not-originate lists to fight robocalls. The new blocking mandate strengthened consumer protections against fraudulent and nuisance calls, using regulatory power to curb abusive telecommunications practices. (16 Sep 2025)

7. Federal Communications Commission sought comment on information collection for land mobile radio service records. The FCC's PRA notice aimed to streamline data requirements for radio licensees, affecting compliance costs and the quality of spectrum management information. (16 Sep 2025)

8. Federal Communications Commission adopted georouting requirements for 988 suicide prevention text messages. Mandating georouting for 988 texts improved routing to local crisis centers, enhancing access to mental health support while raising implementation and privacy considerations for carriers. (16 Sep 2025)

9. Trump Department of Labor advanced extensive deregulatory proposals including removal of wage and overtime protections for domestic care workers. The Labor agenda would roll back core protections for millions of low-wage workers, shifting bargaining power toward employers and weakening enforcement capacity. (16 Sep 2025)
10. Environmental Protection Agency released a draft risk evaluation for the chemical D4 under TSCA. EPA's draft assessment of D4's health and environmental risks set the stage for potential restrictions on its use, influencing industrial practices and public exposure. (17 Sep 2025)
11. Environmental Protection Agency extended compliance dates for certain trichloroethylene restrictions. By delaying TCE phaseout deadlines for nuclear fuel and chemical processors, EPA balanced environmental and national security concerns while prolonging use of a hazardous solvent. (17 Sep 2025)
12. Federal Communications Commission corrected media ownership rule text in the Code of Federal Regulations. The technical fix clarified waiver criteria for broadcast ownership limits, affecting how consolidation requests are evaluated in local media markets. (17 Sep 2025)
13. Food and Drug Administration issued draft guidance on developing drugs for disseminated coccidioidomycosis. FDA's guidance provided a clearer regulatory pathway for antifungal treatments, potentially accelerating therapies for a serious infection affecting vulnerable populations. (17 Sep 2025)
14. Food and Drug Administration issued draft guidance on erosive esophagitis drug development. Standardizing trial expectations for erosive esophagitis drugs aimed to harmonize evidence requirements, influencing investment decisions and patient access to new therapies. (17 Sep 2025)
15. Food and Drug Administration issued draft guidance on symptomatic nonerosive GERD drug development. The sGERD guidance clarified endpoints and design for treatments of a common condition, shaping how pharmaceutical firms pursue approvals in a large market. (17 Sep 2025)
16. Credit reporting agencies and broader economy experienced a notable decline in Americans' average credit scores. Falling FICO scores driven by higher costs and resumed student loan payments signaled rising household financial stress, with implications for borrowing access and economic resilience. (17 Sep 2025)
17. Nexstar Media Group canceled Jimmy Kimmel's show while seeking FCC approval for a merger with Tegna. Nexstar's programming decision amid a pending ownership expansion highlighted how regulatory dependencies

can incentivize media companies to align content with perceived FCC preferences. (17 Sep 2025)

18. Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent faced scrutiny over listing two homes as principal residences on mortgage documents. Questions about Bessent's mortgage filings, even absent clear illegality, underscored expectations for financial transparency and ethical conduct by top economic officials. (17 Sep 2025)

19. Drug Enforcement Administration scheduled seven fentanyl-related substances as Schedule I drugs. DEA's scheduling decision tightened controls on emerging fentanyl analogues, aiming to curb abuse and trafficking while affecting research and criminal penalties. (18 Sep 2025)

20. Environmental Protection Agency amended approval of Hawaii's underground storage tank program. EPA's codification of Hawaii's UST rules clarified which state provisions are federally enforceable, shaping local responsibility for preventing fuel leaks and contamination. (18 Sep 2025)

21. Environmental Protection Agency approved Guam's New Source Review plan for sulfur dioxide nonattainment areas. The SIP revision empowered Guam's environmental agency to issue permits for major SO<sub>2</sub> sources, integrating local permitting into the federal Clean Air Act framework. (18 Sep 2025)

22. Environmental Protection Agency issued a Clean Data Determination for Guam's Piti-Cabras sulfur dioxide area. Finding the area met the 2010 SO<sub>2</sub> standard suspended certain planning obligations, easing regulatory burdens while maintaining monitoring requirements. (18 Sep 2025)

23. Food and Drug Administration corrected an error in radiological health regulations. Restoring inadvertently deleted regulatory text ensured clarity for entities subject to radiological health rules, supporting consistent enforcement and compliance. (18 Sep 2025)

24. Food and Drug Administration reclassified certain hepatitis B virus assay devices to lower regulatory burden. Reclassification aimed to streamline oversight of HBV diagnostic devices, potentially improving availability while maintaining safety and effectiveness standards. (18 Sep 2025)

25. Food and Drug Administration set the fiscal year 2026 fee for using a priority review voucher. By pricing voucher use at nearly \$2 million, FDA influenced the economics of expedited drug approvals, affecting which products companies prioritize for fast-track review. (18 Sep 2025)

26. Occupational Safety and Health Administration extended OMB approval for derricks standard information collection. Continuing documentation requirements for derrick operations supported enforcement of workplace safety rules in heavy industry sectors. (18 Sep 2025)

27. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission appointed members to its Performance Review Board. EEOC's PRB appointments shaped how senior executives are evaluated and rewarded, influencing leadership accountability within the civil rights agency. (18 Sep 2025)
28. Drug Enforcement Administration adjusted 2025 production quotas for lisdexamfetamine and d-amphetamine to address shortages. Increasing quotas for key ADHD medications responded to reported shortages, balancing diversion concerns with the need for adequate medical supply. (19 Sep 2025)
29. Environmental Protection Agency published notice of availability for multiple Environmental Impact Statements. EPA's EIS notice enabled public comment on major infrastructure and environmental projects, supporting participatory review of long-term development impacts. (19 Sep 2025)
30. Environmental Protection Agency announced Science Advisory Committee on Chemicals meetings for D4 risk evaluation. Scheduling SACC peer review sessions for D4's draft evaluation embedded external scientific scrutiny into regulatory decisions on a widely used chemical. (19 Sep 2025)
31. Environmental Protection Agency solicited public comments on multiple air pollution information collection requests. EPA's PRA notice on NESHAP and NSPS data collections sought input on reporting burdens, affecting how industries document hazardous emissions. (19 Sep 2025)
32. Food and Drug Administration and U.S. Department of Agriculture extended the comment period on defining ultra-processed foods. Extending input on a uniform definition of ultra-processed foods gave stakeholders more time to shape a concept likely to influence nutrition policy and labeling. (19 Sep 2025)
33. Federal Communications Commission implemented new rate and reporting rules for incarcerated people's communications services. By enforcing the Martha Wright-Reed Act, the FCC capped interstate calling rates and required transparency, easing financial burdens on incarcerated people and families. (19 Sep 2025)
34. Food and Drug Administration corrected a final rule on new animal drug applications. Fixing amendatory language for animal drug approvals ensured accurate regulatory instructions for sponsors, supporting orderly veterinary drug markets. (19 Sep 2025)
35. Food and Drug Administration issued draft guidance on safety labeling changes under Section 505(o)(4). The guidance clarified when FDA can compel label updates based on new safety or reduced effectiveness data, strengthening post-market oversight of drugs and biologics. (19 Sep 2025)
36. Food and Drug Administration reverted its definition of in vitro diag-

nostic products after a court vacatur. Removing explicit coverage of lab-developed tests from the IVD definition aligned FDA rules with a court ruling, reshaping the regulatory landscape for diagnostic labs. (19 Sep 2025)

37. Food and Drug Administration sought OMB approval for information collection on tobacco product exemptions from substantial equivalence. The request governed how manufacturers seek exemptions for minor tobacco product changes, affecting regulatory workload and the pace of product modifications. (19 Sep 2025)

38. Food and Drug Administration sought OMB approval for information collection on meetings about tobacco product development. Formalizing data on pre-submission meetings aimed to standardize interactions between FDA and tobacco firms, influencing how new products enter the market. (19 Sep 2025)

39. Food and Drug Administration requested OMB approval for environmental impact information collection. The NEPA-related collection supported FDA's assessment of environmental consequences of regulated actions, integrating ecological considerations into product approvals. (19 Sep 2025)

40. Food and Drug Administration sought OMB approval for tobacco health document submissions by manufacturers and importers. Requiring ongoing health document submissions from tobacco companies bolstered FDA's evidence base for regulating products linked to disease and addiction. (19 Sep 2025)

41. Food and Drug Administration debarred William Goldsmith from importing drugs for five years after a felony conviction. The debarment enforced consequences for misbranding offenses in drug importation, signaling regulatory intolerance for fraudulent practices in pharmaceutical supply chains. (19 Sep 2025)

42. National Archives and Records Administration appointed members to its Senior Executive Service Performance Review Board. NARA's SES PRB appointments shaped performance oversight for top managers at the nation's archival institution, affecting leadership accountability over federal records. (19 Sep 2025)

43. President Trump signed a proclamation imposing a \$100,000 annual fee on each H-1B visa. The unprecedented executive-imposed fee threatened to price many employers and skilled migrants out of the H-1B program, reshaping labor markets and raising legal questions about fee authority. (19 Sep 2025)

## Information, Memory, and Manipulation

1. The Trump Administration responded to Charlie Kirk's killing by blaming Democrats and signaling a crackdown on critics. Officials framed the murder as evidence of left-wing violence, using inflammatory rhetoric to delegitimize political opponents and justify broader repression. (13 Sep 2025)
2. Fox News host Brian Kilmeade suggested extreme lethal measures for people experiencing homelessness and later apologized. Kilmeade's comments about executing unhoused and mentally ill people, followed by an apology, normalized dehumanizing rhetoric that can soften public resistance to harsh policies. (14 Sep 2025)
3. The Trump Administration ordered removal of slavery-related signs and exhibits from national parks. Stripping slavery exhibits from public sites erased key narratives about racial injustice from shared spaces, reshaping historical memory toward a sanitized national story. (15 Sep 2025)
4. Attorney General Pam Bondi told employers they had an obligation to fire workers who disparaged Charlie Kirk. Bondi's statement encouraged private punishment of political speech, extending state pressure into workplace decisions and chilling criticism of favored figures. (15 Sep 2025)
5. Vice President JD Vance made baseless claims about far-left political violence while hosting Charlie Kirk's podcast. Vance's misinformation about political violence, later debunked, exemplified high-level use of partisan media to distort public understanding of security threats. (15 Sep 2025)
6. Washington Post fired columnist Karen Attiah over social media posts about white men after Kirk's killing. Attiah's dismissal for commentary on race and violence raised concerns that media employers are narrowing acceptable speech in ways that disproportionately silence critical perspectives. (15 Sep 2025; 17 Sep 2025)
7. Justice Department removed a study on far-right extremist violence from its website. Taking down research showing far-right groups as the leading domestic killers obscured evidence that contradicts official narratives blaming the "radical left." (16 Sep 2025; 17 Sep 2025)
8. President Trump threatened ABC News correspondent Jonathan Karl with potential DOJ targeting over tough questioning. Trump's suggestion that the Justice Department might go after a critical journalist signaled willingness to use prosecutorial power to intimidate the press. (16 Sep 2025)
9. Guardian-reported Labor Department leadership issued a memo warning staff of legal consequences for speaking to media about working conditions. The gag order attempted to suppress internal whistleblowing and

public discussion of agency operations, undermining transparency in labor governance. (16 Sep 2025)

10. Pentagon stopped providing atmospheric and oceanic data to scientists and forecasters citing cybersecurity. Curtailing access to key environmental data hindered climate research and forecasting, concentrating informational control within the defense establishment. (17 Sep 2025)

11. The Trump Administration and RFK Jr. canceled a major Moderna bird flu vaccine contract and cut mRNA vaccine funding. Terminating vaccine development contracts on ideological grounds undermined scientific preparedness and signaled hostility to evidence-based public health tools. (17 Sep 2025)

12. Robert F. Kennedy Jr. as HHS Secretary appointed vaccine-skeptical advisers to ACIP after purging prior members. Stacking the vaccine advisory committee with skeptics lacking relevant expertise risked distorting official recommendations and public perceptions of vaccine safety. (18 Sep 2025)

13. President Trump issued an executive order asserting tighter presidential control over federal science funding and messaging. The order framed scientists as untrustworthy and centralized grant scrutiny, enabling political vetting of research agendas and undermining independent inquiry. (17 Sep 2025)

14. Former CDC Director Susan Monarez testified that she was fired for upholding scientific integrity and resisting politicized vaccine directives. Monarez's account documented direct political interference in health guidance, illustrating how dissenting experts are removed to align science with administration narratives. (17 Sep 2025)

15. FCC Chair Brendan Carr threatened broadcasters over Jimmy Kimmel's comments and launched investigations into media companies. Carr's warnings about "remedies" for airing Kimmel and probes into NPR, PBS, and DEI-engaged firms used regulatory leverage to pressure editorial content and corporate practices. (17 Sep 2025; 18 Sep 2025)

16. ABC and Disney suspended Jimmy Kimmel's show indefinitely after FCC threats and affiliate pressure. The network's decision to pull a prominent critic of Trump under regulatory pressure demonstrated how corporate media can become conduits for state-aligned censorship. (17 Sep 2025; 18 Sep 2025)

17. Sinclair Broadcast Group replaced Jimmy Kimmel's slot with a one-hour tribute to Charlie Kirk across its ABC affiliates. Sinclair's coordinated tribute programming in Kimmel's former slot illustrated how consolidated media ownership can rapidly pivot airtime toward regime-aligned narratives. (17 Sep 2025; 18 Sep 2025)

18. Nexstar Media Group preempted Jimmy Kimmel Live! across its ABC stations following FCC pressure. Nexstar's preemption, preceding ABC's suspension, showed how large station groups can act as intermediaries for regulatory intimidation, narrowing the range of televised dissent. (17 Sep 2025; 18 Sep 2025)
19. President Trump suggested TV networks that cover him negatively could face government punishment or license revocation. Trump's threats to punish critical networks, despite their lack of federal licenses, signaled a desire to weaponize regulatory myths to chill unfavorable coverage. (19 Sep 2025)
20. House Democrats and public figures mounted a public outcry against Kimmel's suspension as an attack on free speech. Criticism from politicians, comedians, and unions framed the suspension as censorship, highlighting civil society's role in defending expressive freedoms under regulatory pressure. (18 Sep 2025)
21. UK Channel 4 aired a special program cataloging over 100 falsehoods by President Trump. The fact-checking broadcast represented an international media effort to counter U.S. presidential disinformation, reinforcing norms of evidence-based reporting. (17 Sep 2025)
22. Zeteo and other outlets debunked Vice President Vance's and other officials' false claims about political violence. Independent fact-checking of high-level misinformation about the Kirk killing illustrated the ongoing contest between propaganda and corrective journalism. (15 Sep 2025)
23. Education Department partnered with conservative groups to provide programming on patriotism and liberty. Aligning official educational content with ideologically conservative organizations risked turning civic education into a vehicle for partisan narratives. (17 Sep 2025)
24. President Trump repeated the false claim that he won the 2020 election during a joint press conference. Reasserting the 2020 lie on an international stage continued to erode public trust in electoral legitimacy and normalize denial of certified results. (18 Sep 2025)
25. President Trump and UK Prime Minister Keir Starmer's press team excluded international outlets like Australia's ABC from a joint press conference. Barring certain foreign media, following Trump's threats against an ABC journalist, signaled selective access based on perceived friendliness, undermining press pluralism. (18 Sep 2025)
26. FBI Director Kash Patel admitted he had not fully reviewed the Epstein files and refused to say whether Trump appeared in them. Patel's limited review and evasiveness about Epstein records fueled perceptions that

politically sensitive information about elite misconduct is being shielded from scrutiny. (16 Sep 2025)

27. Texas A&M University leadership forced out faculty and leadership after a complaint about “gender ideology,” leading to the president’s resignation. The chain of firings and the president’s resignation following ideological complaints showed how political pressure can reshape academic governance and chill classroom speech. (19 Sep 2025)

28. Democracy Out Loud and allied groups called for subscription cancellations after Karen Attiah’s firing at the Washington Post. Organized subscriber backlash framed the firing as part of a broader pattern of suppressing dissenting media voices, using consumer power to defend press independence. (17 Sep 2025)

29. House Democrats opened an investigation into ABC, Sinclair, and the FCC over Kimmel’s suspension. The probe sought to uncover whether regulatory threats and corporate coordination produced viewpoint-based censorship, testing institutional defenses for media freedom. (18 Sep 2025)

30. Channel 4 and UK activists aired “Trump v The Truth” and projected Trump–Epstein imagery onto Windsor Castle during his state visit. British media and activists used public spectacle and fact-checking to challenge Trump’s narratives and highlight unresolved questions about his elite associations. (17 Sep 2025)

31. President Trump criticized media coverage and hinted at sanctions on Ukraine during a press gaggle. Trump’s conflation of media grievances with foreign policy commentary illustrated how personal narratives can shape or distort public understanding of international commitments. (15 Sep 2025)

32. Justice Department removed a domestic terrorism study and national parks removed slavery exhibits, narrowing official narratives on violence and history. Coordinated erasure of research on far-right violence and slavery-era imagery curated public memory away from structural injustice and toward regime-friendly stories. (15 Sep 2025; 16 Sep 2025; 17 Sep 2025)

## **CHAPTER 10**

### **WEEK 36 (20 SEP 2025 – 26 SEP 2025): LAW, HUNGER, AND SILENCE AS LEVERAGE**

*With the clock frozen, the administration deepened its use of law, security, and data to punish critics, coerce states, and narrow who counts as fully protected.*

This was a week marked by intense authoritarian consolidation. Key structural actions included weaponizing law enforcement and prosecutions (such as Comey and Brennan's actions, Homan's cover-up, Halligan's appointment, and DOJ voter-data lawsuits), formally classifying dissent as terrorism (Antifa designation and domestic terrorism memo), and tightening control over information (Pentagon press commitments, FCC threats, Kimmel saga, and suppression of economic data). The balance between the executive and legislative branches further shifted through unilateral foreign strikes, redirection of foreign aid, TikTok's defiance of statutes and courts, and Supreme Court orders that extend presidential influence over independent agencies and funds. Immigration and civil rights policies were used as tools for layered citizenship and political retaliation, exemplified by ICE's mass detention of non-criminals, high-profile arrests, and large deportation budgets. Civil rights efforts related to climate and housing were rolled back, and green and preservation funds were cut back, deepening regulatory capture and inequality. Some resistance persisted—federal courts challenged grants and emergency funds, state and regional public health coalitions formed, congressional oversight examined Homan and ICE-related deaths, and Adelita Grijalva was elected—but these efforts were overshadowed by coordinated attempts to politicize the civil service, intimidate lawyers and media, and normalize chaos as a governing strategy.

## Power and Authority

1. President Trump signed an executive order designating Antifa as a domestic terrorist organization. By labeling Antifa a domestic terrorist organization despite the lack of a clear legal framework, the president expanded executive power to treat loosely defined political dissent as terrorism, enabling broader surveillance and criminalization of protest activity. (22 Sep 2025; 23 Sep 2025)

2. President Trump issued a presidential memorandum targeting alleged leftwing domestic terror networks. The memorandum directing multi-agency investigations of a supposed radical left domestic "terror network" broadened security powers against activists and nonprofits, blurring lines between counterterrorism and suppression of political opposition. (26 Sep 2025)

3. President Trump ordered a lethal strike on a Venezuelan vessel without providing supporting evidence. Ordering a lethal strike on a Venezuelan boat while withholding evidence from Congress and the public weakened democratic oversight of the use of force and raised questions about compliance with domestic and international law. (22 Sep 2025; 23 Sep 2025)

4. President Trump threatened Venezuela and Afghanistan with punitive actions on social media. Public threats against Venezuela and Afghanistan over prisoners and Bagram Air Base signaled a personalized, coercive approach to foreign policy that sidelines diplomatic process and congressional war-powers constraints. (20 Sep 2025)

5. President Trump signed executive orders delaying and restructuring the TikTok ban contrary to statute and court rulings. By repeatedly delaying a congressionally mandated TikTok ban and dictating divestiture terms despite a Supreme Court ruling, the president asserted unilateral control over digital infrastructure in defiance of legislative and judicial limits. (23 Sep 2025; 25 Sep 2025)

6. President Trump publicly pressured the Justice Department to prosecute named political opponents. Calling on the attorney general to indict specific critics, including Letitia James, James Comey, and Adam Schiff, undermined prosecutorial independence and framed law enforcement as a tool for punishing political enemies. (20 Sep 2025; 21 Sep 2025)

7. President Trump threatened legal action against media critics and claimed negative coverage was illegal. Declaring that negative coverage of his administration was "really illegal" and calling for prosecution of hecklers and comedians signaled a willingness to criminalize criticism, chilling free expression. (22 Sep 2025)

8. President Trump canceled meetings with Democratic leaders on

government funding negotiations. Canceling bipartisan budget talks while a shutdown loomed used brinkmanship to pressure Congress, risking disruption of federal services and weakening norms of cooperative budgeting. (23 Sep 2025; 25 Sep 2025)

9. Office of Management and Budget Director Russell Vought threatened mass firings of federal employees in the event of a shutdown. Threatening to fire, rather than furlough, large numbers of civil servants during a shutdown weaponized budget impasses to intimidate the federal workforce and reshape agencies along political lines. (25 Sep 2025; 26 Sep 2025)

10. President Trump announced steep new tariffs on pharmaceuticals, furniture, and trucks. Imposing sweeping tariffs despite prior court limits on his trade authority concentrated economic power in the executive and risked using trade tools for political or personal agendas rather than transparent policy goals. (25 Sep 2025; 26 Sep 2025)

11. President Trump directed agencies to prepare for large-scale reductions in force tied to his budget priorities. Ordering agencies to plan permanent layoffs for programs not aligned with presidential priorities in a shutdown scenario threatened to purge the civil service based on ideology rather than merit or statutory mandate. (25 Sep 2025)

12. President Trump used public speeches at the United Nations to attack multilateralism, migration, and climate policy. Using the UN platform to denounce a "globalist migration agenda," green energy, and allied leaders advanced a nationalist narrative that undermines cooperative international norms and reframes global institutions as adversaries. (22 Sep 2025; 23 Sep 2025; 24 Sep 2025)

## Institutions and Governance

1. Director of National Intelligence Tulsi Gabbard revoked 37 security clearances without notifying the White House. Revoking dozens of security clearances, including for senior intelligence officials and congressional staff, without normal coordination suggested use of classification powers for political retribution and disrupted interbranch oversight of intelligence. (20 Sep 2025)

2. Democratic lawmakers introduced a reform package including a constitutional amendment to overturn Citizens United. Proposing to reverse Citizens United and restore campaign-finance limits sought to reduce the dominance of corporate money in elections and strengthen democratic accountability. (20 Sep 2025)

3. House of Representatives voted unanimously to increase funding for

the Baltic Security Initiative. Boosting Baltic Security Initiative funding in defiance of Pentagon plans to end assistance signaled congressional willingness to check executive decisions that could weaken NATO's eastern flank. (20 Sep 2025)

4. U.S. District Judge Steven Merryday dismissed President Trump's \$15 billion defamation lawsuit against the New York Times. Dismissing an expansive defamation suit and criticizing its abusive rhetoric reinforced judicial protections for press freedom against attempts by a sitting president to weaponize civil courts against media critics. (20 Sep 2025)

5. Federal courts nationwide blocked over 100 Trump administration policies in more than 400 lawsuits. Extensive litigation that halted numerous administration policies and reinstated civil servants and CDC funding illustrated the judiciary's role as a counterweight to executive overreach. (20 Sep 2025)

6. California Governor Gavin Newsom signed a law banning most law enforcement officers from covering their faces on duty. Prohibiting face coverings for most officers, including federal immigration agents, aimed to increase transparency and accountability in policing, countering opaque enforcement practices. (20 Sep 2025)

7. Democratic members of Congress launched oversight inquiries into bribery allegations against border official Tom Homan. Seeking documents on an undercover FBI bribery sting involving Tom Homan after DOJ closed the case reflected legislative efforts to revive stalled corruption probes and scrutinize politicized non-prosecution decisions. (22 Sep 2025)

8. Supreme Court of the United States granted a stay allowing President Trump to keep Rebecca Slaughter out of her FTC post. Staying a lower-court order reinstating an FTC commissioner let the president's contested firing stand during appeal, signaling judicial openness to expanded presidential control over independent regulators. (22 Sep 2025)

9. Department of Justice leadership under Trump drastically reduced staffing in the Public Integrity Section. Shrinking DOJ's Public Integrity Section from 36 attorneys to two severely weakened federal capacity to investigate corruption by public officials, undermining a key institutional safeguard. (22 Sep 2025)

10. House Judiciary Committee Republicans voted against subpoenaing major bank CEOs over Jeffrey Epstein transactions. Refusing to compel testimony and records from banks handling Epstein-linked funds limited congressional scrutiny of possible financial complicity in abuse and signaled protection of powerful institutions. (23 Sep 2025)

11. House Oversight Committee leadership delayed release of records

related to the Jeffrey Epstein investigation. Slow-walking the release of Epstein records, reportedly containing references to President Trump, raised concerns that congressional oversight was being used to shield politically sensitive information. (23 Sep 2025)

12. FBI Director Kash Patel refused to answer congressional questions about his appearance in Epstein records. Declining to address lawmakers' questions about his own mention in Epstein-related documents deepened doubts about FBI transparency in a high-profile abuse case involving elite figures. (23 Sep 2025)

13. Federal judiciary blocked the Trump administration from conditioning emergency grants on immigration cooperation. A ruling that federal conditions on emergency management grants were unconstitutional and arbitrary protected state autonomy and limited the executive's ability to coerce immigration policy through funding threats. (24 Sep 2025)

14. North Carolina General Assembly passed a controversial crime bill prompting a Senate walkout. Enacting a sweeping crime bill over opposition walkouts highlighted partisan use of state legislative power to reshape criminal justice policy with potential implications for civil liberties and enforcement discretion. (24 Sep 2025)

15. House of Representatives passed a continuing resolution to fund the government through November 21. Approving a short-term funding bill with narrow margins temporarily averted a shutdown from the House side, but partisan divisions and Senate resistance left federal operations at continued risk. (25 Sep 2025)

16. United States Senate failed to pass the House's continuing resolution to fund the government. Senate rejection of the House funding bill, amid disputes over health-care subsidies, increased the likelihood of a shutdown and underscored gridlock in the budget process. (25 Sep 2025)

17. The Trump Administration officials signaled expectation of a government shutdown that would disproportionately affect Democratic constituencies. Treating a looming shutdown as a political weapon expected to hurt opposing constituencies framed core government operations as leverage in partisan conflict rather than a neutral public service. (26 Sep 2025)

18. Supreme Court of the United States stayed lower-court orders requiring continuation of foreign aid under Executive Order 14169. Allowing the administration to pause billions in congressionally appropriated foreign aid while litigation proceeds strengthened executive leverage over spending decisions traditionally controlled by Congress. (26 Sep 2025)

19. State Department and Treasury Department under Trump redirected and prepared large foreign aid packages outside normal appropriations chan-

nels. Plans to reallocate \$1.8 billion in foreign aid and prepare a \$20 billion package for Argentina without standard congressional processes blurred legal lines on appropriations and tied aid more closely to ideological allies. (21 Sep 2025; 22 Sep 2025; 23 Sep 2025; 25 Sep 2025)

20. National Archives and Records Administration improperly released nearly unredacted military records of Rep. Mikie Sherrill to a political opponent's ally. Providing sensitive military records of a sitting member of Congress to an opponent's ally appeared to violate privacy protections and suggested politicization of archival processes in an active gubernatorial race. (25 Sep 2025; 26 Sep 2025)

21. National Archives and Records Administration invited public comment on proposed federal records schedules. Seeking public input on how agencies dispose of records supported transparency and civic oversight of decisions that shape the long-term documentary record of federal actions. (26 Sep 2025)

22. House Oversight and allied lawmakers advanced efforts to force a floor vote on releasing Jeffrey Epstein files despite resistance. Securing signatures for a discharge petition to release Epstein-related government files challenged leadership's attempts to block transparency in a case involving powerful figures. (24 Sep 2025; 25 Sep 2025)

23. Senators and House members demanded information on deaths of detainees in ICE custody. Congressional inquiries into ICE detainee deaths sought to impose oversight on detention conditions and mortality reporting in a system with limited external accountability. (26 Sep 2025)

24. City of Portland, Oregon issued a notice of violation to an ICE detention facility for breaching land-use permits. Enforcing local permit limits on detainee numbers and overnight holds asserted municipal authority over federal detention practices and highlighted tensions between local governance and federal immigration enforcement. (24 Sep 2025)

25. United Nations General Assembly opened its 80th session emphasizing cooperation and international law. The UN's 80th General Assembly session reaffirmed multilateral commitments to peace, human rights, and climate justice, providing a counterpoint to nationalist rhetoric from some member states. (24 Sep 2025)

## Civil Rights and Dissent

i. FBI and DOJ leadership under Trump closed a bribery investigation into border czar Tom Homan despite recorded evidence. Shutting down a case where Homan was recorded accepting \$50,000 from undercover agents, and

later denying he took the money, signaled selective non-enforcement for powerful insiders and weakened deterrence against corruption. (20 Sep 2025; 22 Sep 2025; 23 Sep 2025)

2. President Trump and Attorney General Pam Bondi forced out U.S. attorney Erik Siebert and installed loyalist Lindsey Halligan in his place. Removing a prosecutor who declined to charge Trump's critics and replacing him with a former personal lawyer lacking prosecutorial experience politicized a key U.S. attorney's office and paved the way for targeted prosecutions. (20 Sep 2025; 21 Sep 2025; 22 Sep 2025; 23 Sep 2025; 25 Sep 2025; 26 Sep 2025)

3. Department of Justice under Lindsey Halligan secured a federal indictment of former FBI Director James Comey for allegedly lying to Congress. Indicting a prominent Trump critic on contested charges after career prosecutors had declined the case exemplified the use of criminal law to punish perceived enemies and intimidate future oversight witnesses. (25 Sep 2025; 26 Sep 2025)

4. The Trump Administration launched a criminal investigation into former CIA Director John Brennan over 2016 Russia assessment. Targeting Brennan for his role in assessing Russian election interference extended a pattern of investigations into officials associated with prior scrutiny of Trump, discouraging candid intelligence analysis. (26 Sep 2025)

5. Department of Justice planned investigations into a Soros-funded group following presidential demands. Directing U.S. attorneys to draft plans to investigate a donor-linked nonprofit at the president's urging blurred the line between neutral law enforcement and retaliation against perceived ideological opponents. (24 Sep 2025)

6. President Trump and DOJ sued multiple states to obtain detailed voter data and rolls. Filing lawsuits to seize extensive voter information from resistant states under the banner of integrity threatened voter privacy and state control over elections, and could facilitate targeted suppression. (25 Sep 2025; 26 Sep 2025)

7. Immigration and Customs Enforcement and DHS expanded detention and enforcement against immigrants with no criminal record. Data showing more ICE detainees without criminal records than with them, alongside harsh detention conditions and deaths, revealed a shift toward mass preventive detention that undermines due process and equal treatment. (25 Sep 2025; 26 Sep 2025)

8. Immigration and Customs Enforcement detained Des Moines school superintendent Ian Roberts over immigration status. Arresting a widely respected school superintendent with a final removal order highlighted how

aggressive enforcement can abruptly disrupt local leadership and intimidate immigrant communities. (26 Sep 2025)

9. Immigration and Customs Enforcement officer used force against a detainee's wife at a New York immigration court, leading to his removal from duty. The viral video of an ICE officer pushing Monica Moreta-Galarza to the ground outside immigration court underscored concerns about excessive force in civil enforcement settings and the vulnerability of families seeking due process. (26 Sep 2025)

10. ICE and Louisiana prison authorities held detainees in harsh conditions at Angola prison, prompting a hunger strike. Nineteen ICE detainees' hunger strike over lack of medical care, basic necessities, and legal access at Angola prison highlighted severe rights concerns in immigration detention repurposed from a notorious penal facility. (26 Sep 2025)

11. ICE and federal courts detained double-amputee Rodney Taylor for months, prompting a habeas petition. A disabled immigrant's habeas challenge to prolonged ICE detention despite serious medical needs spotlighted the human-rights and legal issues raised by expanded detention authority and limited release options. (25 Sep 2025)

12. California and local authorities investigated the death of Ismael Ayala-Uribe in ICE custody. State investigation into a detainee's death following surgery while in ICE custody underscored accountability gaps in medical care for detained immigrants and the need for external scrutiny. (25 Sep 2025)

13. Los Angeles car wash owner filed a \$50 million lawsuit against the federal government over an ICE raid. A major damages suit alleging abuses during an ICE raid raised questions about civil-rights violations in workplace enforcement and the availability of legal remedies for targeted businesses. (26 Sep 2025)

14. Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth dissolved the advisory committee on women in the armed services. Eliminating a long-standing advisory body on women's issues in the military reduced institutional channels for addressing gender-specific concerns and signaled hostility to equity-focused oversight. (23 Sep 2025)

15. Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth decided to retain Medals of Honor for soldiers involved in the Wounded Knee massacre. Refusing to rescind Medals of Honor for troops who killed Lakota civilians at Wounded Knee reinforced a contested historical narrative that minimizes state violence against Indigenous people. (25 Sep 2025)

16. Arizona state representative John Gillette called on social media for Rep. Pramila Jayapal to be tried, convicted, and hanged. An elected official's

public call for the execution of a member of Congress over nonviolent protest advocacy normalized violent rhetoric against political opponents and degraded democratic discourse. (26 Sep 2025)

17. Police departments in Michigan and Los Angeles used teargas and crowd-control chemicals on protesters, causing lasting health effects. Deployment of teargas at protests over Gaza and immigration, with reported menstrual and hormonal impacts, raised serious concerns about disproportionate force against demonstrators and lack of regulation of chemical agents. (26 Sep 2025)

18. Georgia Republican Party leadership barred Brad Raffensperger and expelled Geoff Duncan over opposition to Trump's election claims. Symbolically excluding officials who defended the 2020 election from party ranks enforced loyalty tests around false fraud narratives, narrowing space for internal dissent and rule-of-law advocacy. (23 Sep 2025)

19. Young climate activists filed a human-rights petition against the U.S. government at the Inter-American Commission. Petitioning an international human-rights body over U.S. fossil-fuel support used transnational legal avenues to challenge domestic climate policy and assert rights to life and health. (25 Sep 2025)

20. Protesters in New York City demonstrated outside Benjamin Netanyahu's hotel, leading to several arrests. Arrests at a small, non-violent protest against the Israeli prime minister during UN week illustrated how security operations around diplomatic events can constrain expressive rights. (26 Sep 2025)

21. North Carolina voters and election officials began early voting in municipal elections under existing ID and access rules. The start of early voting for local elections, with information campaigns on sites and ID rules, supported broad participation in local governance despite wider national tensions. (24 Sep 2025)

22. Representative Jason Crow delivered a floor speech urging unity against authoritarianism. Calling on Americans to confront authoritarian tendencies and defend democratic norms highlighted the role of elected officials in mobilizing civic resistance to institutional erosion. (20 Sep 2025)

23. Conservative activists made an unauthorized visit to Tennessee State University to stage a campus event. An unsanctioned campus visit by conservative activists raised questions about how universities balance free-speech access with safety and policy compliance amid polarized politics. (23 Sep 2025)

24. Police and prosecutors in Washington state arrested and charged four people in a violent hate crime against a trans woman. Charging teens and an

adult with assault and hate-crime offenses for attacking a transgender woman demonstrated use of criminal law to protect LGBTQ+ individuals from targeted violence. (20 Sep 2025)

25. ICE and federal courts expanded detention authority following a Board of Immigration Appeals decision limiting release. Legal changes that curtailed release options for detainees, highlighted in Rodney Taylor's case, entrenched a system where immigrants can be held for long periods with limited judicial relief. (25 Sep 2025)

## Economic Structure

1. U.S. Department of Agriculture under Trump canceled the annual national food insecurity survey and household food security report. Ending long-standing USDA food insecurity reporting removed a key data source for targeting nutrition programs, weakening evidence-based policymaking on hunger during a period of economic strain. (20 Sep 2025; 22 Sep 2025)

2. U.S. Department of Agriculture froze over \$10 million in food assistance funding for Kansas over a data-sharing dispute. Suspending food assistance funds because Kansas refused to share beneficiaries' personal data used federal resources punitively, risking harm to low-income residents to pressure a state government. (20 Sep 2025)

3. The Trump Administration rolled back climate protections and halted or delayed over 150 renewable energy initiatives. Curtailing grants and projects for solar and wind energy reversed progress on decarbonization and undercut job-creating clean-energy investments, privileging fossil-fuel interests over long-term public and economic health. (22 Sep 2025)

4. The Trump Administration appointees at HUD rolled back enforcement of the Fair Housing Act and imposed gag orders on staff. Weakening HUD's fair-housing enforcement, reassigning staff, and discouraging discrimination cases eroded protections against segregation and domestic-violence-related housing bias, deepening structural inequality. (22 Sep 2025; 24 Sep 2025)

5. President Trump announced a \$100,000 fee for companies employing H-1B visa workers. Imposing a massive fee on employers of H-1B workers raised barriers to skilled immigration, potentially disrupting labor markets and using economic policy to signal hostility toward foreign workers. (22 Sep 2025)

6. Department of Homeland Security proposed overhauling the H-1B visa lottery to favor higher-paid applicants. Prioritizing higher-paid H-1B applicants would tilt skilled immigration further toward elite employers and

wealthier workers, reinforcing class-based access to U.S. opportunities. (23 Sep 2025)

7. The Trump Administration withheld over \$65 million in magnet school grants from districts with trans-inclusive policies. Denying federal education grants to schools that maintained protections for trans and nonbinary students used funding to coerce local policy changes and undermined equal access to education. (25 Sep 2025)

8. U.S. Energy Secretary Chris Wright announced the return of \$13 billion in green project funds to the Treasury. Sending billions earmarked for clean-energy projects back to the Treasury reversed climate-oriented industrial policy and signaled federal retreat from supporting a just energy transition. (24 Sep 2025)

9. President Trump announced new tariffs on Brazilian goods and furniture imports, citing political grievances and trade concerns. Tariffs targeting Brazil and broad categories of furniture and trucks leveraged trade policy to punish a foreign judiciary and reshape markets, intertwining economic tools with political retaliation. (23 Sep 2025; 25 Sep 2025; 26 Sep 2025)

10. Department of Homeland Security and FEMA leadership expedited over \$11 million in disaster aid for a donor-linked Florida pier project. Fast-tracking FEMA funds for a project after intervention by a political donor suggested disaster relief decisions were influenced by political connections rather than neutral criteria of need. (25 Sep 2025; 26 Sep 2025)

11. State Department under Trump announced plans to redirect \$1.8 billion in foreign aid toward "America First" projects. Reprogramming large aid sums away from democracy and health initiatives toward ideologically branded projects weakened bipartisan foreign-aid norms and congressional control over spending priorities. (25 Sep 2025)

12. Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent prepared a \$20 billion aid package for Argentina outside usual appropriations processes. Structuring a massive aid package for an allied government without standard congressional appropriations raised concerns about bypassing legal budget controls to favor ideological partners abroad. (22 Sep 2025; 25 Sep 2025)

13. U.S. Congress allocated \$170 billion to ICE over four years to support mass deportations. Committing unprecedented funding to deport one million immigrants annually entrenched a resource-intensive enforcement model that prioritizes removal over integration or due-process safeguards. (24 Sep 2025)

14. The Trump Administration withheld billions in foreign aid appropriated by Congress following Supreme Court approval. Using judicially sanctioned authority to let \$4 billion in foreign aid lapse shifted control of

appropriated funds from Congress to the executive, weakening legislative power over the purse. (26 Sep 2025)

15. Bureau of Labor Statistics postponed its annual consumer expenditures report after the commissioner's firing. Delaying a key inflation and spending report soon after the president fired the BLS commissioner raised fears that economic statistics were being managed for political convenience. (22 Sep 2025)

16. The Trump Administration ended the USDA annual household food security report despite high hunger levels. Terminating a decades-old food security report that documented millions of hungry households reduced visibility into hardship and constrained policymakers' ability to respond to rising need. (22 Sep 2025)

17. The Trump Administration redirected foreign aid and disaster funds in ways that favored political allies and donors. Patterns of aid reallocation—to Argentina, ideologically aligned projects, and donor-linked infrastructure—blurred the line between public policy and patronage, embedding cronyism in fiscal decisions. (25 Sep 2025; 26 Sep 2025)

18. EPA and other federal regulators issued multiple routine regulatory agendas, approvals, and information collection notices. Publication of unified agendas, SIP approvals, and technical guidance across EPA, FCC, FDA, OSHA, and others reflected ongoing technocratic rulemaking that shapes economic and environmental baselines. (22 Sep 2025; 23 Sep 2025; 24 Sep 2025; 25 Sep 2025; 26 Sep 2025)

## Information, Memory, and Manipulation

1. Pentagon under Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth required journalists to sign pledges restricting collection of unauthorized information and limited building access. New Pentagon rules conditioning press credentials on pledges not to gather unapproved information, even if unclassified, curtailed independent reporting on military affairs and increased executive control over defense news. (20 Sep 2025; 21 Sep 2025; 22 Sep 2025)

2. Federal Communications Commission under Chair Brendan Carr threatened ABC affiliates' broadcast licenses over Jimmy Kimmel's criticism of the administration. FCC threats to revoke ABC station licenses after Kimmel criticized the administration used regulatory power to intimidate broadcasters and chill satirical and critical speech. (21 Sep 2025)

3. ABC/Disney and major station groups suspended and then reinstated Jimmy Kimmel's show while some affiliates refused to air it. The suspension, public backlash, reinstatement, and continued refusal by Sinclair and

Nexstar to carry Kimmel's show illustrated how political pressure and ownership structures can shape which critical voices reach broadcast audiences. (21 Sep 2025; 23 Sep 2025; 25 Sep 2025)

4. President Trump criticized ABC for Kimmel's return and suggested the show was an illegal campaign contribution. Framing a late-night show's criticism as an illegal donation to Democrats and hinting at further action against ABC extended efforts to delegitimize and pressure independent media. (25 Sep 2025)

5. President Trump promoted unproven claims linking acetaminophen use in pregnancy to autism and made anti-vaccine statements. Spreading medically unsupported claims about Tylenol and vaccines from the presidency undermined trust in scientific authorities and risked discouraging safe treatments and immunizations. (22 Sep 2025; 23 Sep 2025; 24 Sep 2025)

6. Bureau of Labor Statistics and USDA under Trump suppressed or delayed key economic and social data releases. Postponing consumer expenditure data and canceling food security reports after leadership changes suggested economic statistics were being selectively managed, limiting public insight into inflation and hardship. (20 Sep 2025; 22 Sep 2025)

7. National Archives branch released nearly unredacted military records of Rep. Mikie Sherrill to a partisan requester. Providing sensitive personnel records to an opponent's ally in an active campaign weaponized archival access and raised fears that state-held information could be used to tilt elections. (25 Sep 2025; 26 Sep 2025)

8. Congressional Republicans and allies worked to block or delay a floor vote on releasing Jeffrey Epstein files. Efforts to prevent a vote on disclosing Epstein-related government records, despite a discharge petition, suggested a desire to keep potentially damaging information about elites from public view. (24 Sep 2025)

9. President Trump and White House communications staff claimed UN teleprompter, microphone, and escalator issues were sabotage and demanded investigations. Portraying routine technical glitches at the UN as deliberate sabotage and calling for accountability fed a narrative of victimization and distrust of international institutions. (24 Sep 2025; 25 Sep 2025)

10. The Trump Administration introduced a "Presidential Walk of Fame" at the White House excluding Joe Biden's portrait. Displaying gold-framed portraits of presidents while replacing Biden's with an autopen image symbolically erased a recent predecessor from official memory, signaling partisan curation of history. (24 Sep 2025)

ii. Oklahoma Superintendent Ryan Walters resigned to lead a conservative education nonprofit promoting religious and right-wing curricula.

Walters' move from overseeing public schools to running a national conservative education group extended efforts to infuse public education with religious and partisan narratives about history and civics. (25 Sep 2025)

12. Arizona state representative John Gillette and allied media ecosystems used social media to call for execution of a congresswoman and defend January 6 participants. Gillette's extreme online rhetoric, including endorsing violence against a sitting member of Congress, contributed to a media environment that normalizes threats against democratic actors. (26 Sep 2025)

13. President Trump used UN and domestic speeches to spread misinformation about migration, climate, and his record. False claims about ending wars, sharia law in London, and climate policy at high-profile venues amplified disinformation that shapes public opinion and undermines fact-based debate on global issues. (22 Sep 2025; 23 Sep 2025; 24 Sep 2025)

14. House Judiciary Committee Republicans and FBI leadership limited transparency around Epstein-related financial and investigative records. Blocking subpoenas for banks and refusing to answer questions about officials' appearance in Epstein records kept potential elite wrongdoing opaque and eroded trust in impartial enforcement. (23 Sep 2025)

15. Media companies Sinclair and Nexstar refused to air Jimmy Kimmel's show on their ABC affiliates after his reinstatement. Station groups' decisions not to carry a reinstated critical program highlighted how concentrated media ownership can filter national content and limit exposure to dissenting viewpoints. (25 Sep 2025)

16. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and FDA advanced technical guidance and data collection on suicide prevention and medical products. Public workshops and guidance on suicide prevention, diagnostics, and therapeutics showed health agencies continuing evidence-based communication even as political leaders spread conflicting health narratives. (22 Sep 2025; 23 Sep 2025; 25 Sep 2025)

## CHAPTER 11

### **WEEK 37 (27 SEP 2025 – 3 OCT 2025): SHUTDOWN AS QUIET PURGE**

*A nearly motionless clock masks a week in which shutdown brinkmanship, militarized enforcement, and deepfakes quietly rewired power, rights, and public memory.*

This was a turbulent week: a government shutdown, widespread federal resignations, and blatant militarization of domestic politics combined with aggressive information manipulation and targeted economic sanctions. Executive power pushed aggressively against oversight, using the shutdown as leverage to implement “irreversible” cuts, purge the civil service, and weaponize federal funding against Democratic-led jurisdictions. Civil-military boundaries blurred as Trump and Hegseth summoned hundreds of generals, threatened dismissals, loosened rules of engagement, and deployed or tried to deploy troops and Guard units into cities over state objections. Immigration and protest areas became testing grounds for authoritarian policing: raids, mass detentions, deportations of journalists, and designating Antifa as terrorists. Meanwhile, the White House and agencies flooded the environment with deepfakes, pseudoscience, and partisan messaging on official channels, while suspending Voice of America and pressuring platforms. Courts and some states pushed back on free speech, deportations, and FEMA reallocation, but these defenses were limited. Structurally, the week solidified executive impunity, weakened neutral administration, and normalized chaos as a governing model.

## Power and Authority

1. President Trump ordered federal agencies to prepare for large-scale firings tied to a possible shutdown. The directive to ready mass firings as part of a deferred resignation program used the threat of a shutdown to shrink and intimidate the civil service, concentrating executive control over federal capacity. (28 Sep 2025)

2. President Trump signed an executive order designating Antifa as a major terrorist organization. Labeling a loosely defined protest tendency as a terrorist organization expanded executive security powers over domestic dissent, blurring lines between political opposition and terrorism. (28 Sep 2025)

3. President Trump ordered declassification and release of all government records on Amelia Earhart. Using declassification powers to spotlight historic curiosities amid scrutiny over Epstein records suggested executive control of disclosure can be used to distract from contemporary accountability questions. (28 Sep 2025)

4. President Trump demanded Microsoft fire its global affairs president Lisa Monaco over her Jan. 6 role. Pressuring a private firm to dismiss a former Biden official for work on Jan. 6 accountability showed a willingness to extend presidential retaliation into corporate employment decisions. (28 Sep 2025)

5. President Trump announced he would send federal troops to Portland to confront alleged domestic terrorists. Ordering troops into a U.S. city over state and local objections to confront protests framed as terrorism normalized military involvement in domestic law-and-order politics. (27 Sep 2025; 28 Sep 2025; 29 Sep 2025; 3 Oct 2025)

6. President Trump met with congressional leaders but failed to reach a deal to avert a shutdown. The breakdown of White House talks over funding and ACA subsidies contributed directly to a shutdown, illustrating executive use of brinkmanship over core social benefits. (28 Sep 2025; 29 Sep 2025; 30 Sep 2025)

7. President Trump threatened to use the shutdown to implement irreversible cuts to benefit programs. Openly describing the shutdown as an opportunity to make permanent cuts to medical and social programs showed crisis being leveraged to reshape the state without normal legislative consent. (3 Oct 2025)

8. President Trump blamed Democrats for the impending and then actual government shutdown. Framing the shutdown as solely Democrats' fault while signaling that executive agencies could make irreversible cuts during

the lapse politicized a core budgeting failure to justify expanded unilateral action. (30 Sep 2025; 1 Oct 2025)

9. President Trump declared an armed conflict with drug cartels and labeled them terrorist organizations. Formally treating drug cartels as wartime enemies broadened presidential war powers into law-enforcement domains, lowering thresholds for military force without clear congressional authorization. (3 Oct 2025)

10. President Trump announced new tariffs on furniture and movies to promote domestic production. Unilateral tariff announcements affecting targeted sectors underscored how trade tools can be used for politically salient regional promises, with downstream effects on prices and jobs. (28 Sep 2025)

11. President Trump announced plans to meet Xi Jinping and use tariff revenue to aid soybean farmers. Linking tariff-driven farm bailouts to trade talks with China showed executive control over both the creation of economic harm and selective compensation for politically important constituencies. (1 Oct 2025)

12. President Trump announced a Gaza peace plan creating a Board of Peace he would lead. Designing a Gaza peace framework centered on a Trump-led oversight body with limited Palestinian input concentrated diplomatic authority in a personalized structure with weak representative legitimacy. (28 Sep 2025; 29 Sep 2025)

13. President Trump signed an executive order granting NATO-like security guarantees to Qatar. Extending de facto alliance guarantees to Qatar by executive order without Senate consent bypassed constitutional checks on treaty-like commitments in foreign policy. (29 Sep 2025; 2 Oct 2025)

14. President Trump announced a plan to end the Gaza war with a Trump- and Blair-led board. Proposing a peace structure that pledged full U.S. backing to Israel if Hamas rejected the deal signaled a highly asymmetric approach to conflict resolution with limited multilateral oversight. (28 Sep 2025; 29 Sep 2025)

15. President Trump announced he had remodeled the Oval Office with lavish gold fixtures. Publicly emphasizing personal aesthetic changes to the Oval Office highlighted the use of symbolic state spaces for leader glorification rather than institutional continuity. (29 Sep 2025)

16. President Trump declared he would withhold federal funds from New York City if Zohran Mamdani is elected mayor. Threatening to cut federal funding based on the outcome of a local mayoral race used national fiscal power to influence municipal electoral choices. (29 Sep 2025)

17. White House and OMB Director Russ Vought froze or threatened to

cut billions in infrastructure and climate funds to Democratic jurisdictions during the shutdown. Targeted freezes and cancellation threats for major projects in New York City, Chicago, and climate programs in non-Trump states weaponized federal spending to punish political opponents. (1 Oct 2025; 2 Oct 2025; 3 Oct 2025)

18. President Trump announced a formal armed conflict posture toward drug traffickers in Venezuela. Planning military strikes on alleged drug targets inside Venezuela blurred lines between counternarcotics enforcement and undeclared foreign war, expanding unilateral use-of-force claims. (27 Sep 2025)

19. President Trump used a government shutdown to prioritize a \$20 billion bailout for Argentina. Continuing a large foreign bailout for Argentina's right-wing government while domestic agencies were shuttered highlighted selective prioritization of allied foreign interests amid internal fiscal crisis. (2 Oct 2025)

## Institutions and Governance

1. Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth decided Wounded Knee massacre soldiers would retain their Medals of Honor. Affirming Medals of Honor for participants in the Wounded Knee massacre signaled institutional endorsement of a contested historical narrative, affecting how military valor and past atrocities are officially remembered. (27 Sep 2025)

2. Department of Justice refused to release additional Jeffrey Epstein investigation files. Declining to disclose further Epstein records despite public and survivor pressure limited transparency around elite networks implicated in abuse and the government's handling of the case. (27 Sep 2025)

3. House Oversight Committee Democrats released a third batch of documents from the Jeffrey Epstein estate. Publishing logs and schedules from the Epstein estate advanced congressional transparency efforts around powerful associates despite partisan delays. (27 Sep 2025; 28 Sep 2025)

4. Republican congressional leaders pushed appropriations language shielding pesticide makers from state warnings and lawsuits. Embedding liability protections for pesticide manufacturers in spending bills sought to preempt state health warnings and litigation, weakening legal recourse for harmed consumers. (27 Sep 2025)

5. Florida First District Court of Appeal struck down the state's long-standing open-carry ban. Invalidating Florida's ban on open display of firearms expanded gun-carry rights and created confusion over remaining

location-based restrictions, shifting public-safety regulation toward maximal Second Amendment interpretations. (27 Sep 2025)

6. Justice Clarence Thomas signaled willingness to revisit precedents on church-state separation and same-sex marriage. Questioning the binding force of key precedents foreshadowed potential Supreme Court moves to roll back protections for LGBTQ+ rights and secular governance. (27 Sep 2025; 28 Sep 2025)

7. The Trump Administration fired over 100 immigration judges and recruited 600 military lawyers as replacements. Purging experienced immigration judges and installing large numbers of military lawyers with limited subject expertise undermined judicial independence in a system handling millions of cases. (28 Sep 2025)

8. American Federation of Government Employees and allied unions sued over the Trump administration's deferred resignation program. Challenging a mass-resignation scheme as coercive and ultra vires sought to defend congressional authority and agency functionality against executive-driven workforce hollowing. (28 Sep 2025)

9. Senator Dick Durbin and Illinois delegation pressed ICE for oversight meetings after violent clashes at a detention facility. Repeated but rebuffed oversight requests following forceful ICE responses to protests highlighted congressional difficulty in scrutinizing aggressive immigration operations. (28 Sep 2025)

10. Oregon's congressional delegation visited a Portland ICE facility to investigate detainee treatment and use of force. On-site inspection of an ICE facility by Oregon lawmakers underscored legislative attempts to check federal enforcement practices amid reports of excessive force. (28 Sep 2025)

11. Department of Justice under Attorney General Pam Bondi indicted former FBI Director James Comey for allegedly lying to Congress. Bringing charges against a former FBI director widely seen as a Trump adversary raised concerns that prosecutorial power was being used for political retribution rather than neutral law enforcement. (28 Sep 2025; 29 Sep 2025)

12. New York City Bar Association warned against prosecutions driven by impermissible motives in the Comey case. The bar's statement emphasized professional and constitutional norms against politically motivated prosecutions, signaling institutional resistance within the legal community. (29 Sep 2025)

13. Federal Trade Commission unanimously authorized and filed an antitrust lawsuit against Zillow and Redfin. Challenging an alleged non-compete advertising deal in rental listings showed an independent agency

using litigation to preserve competition in a key housing information market. (1 Oct 2025)

14. Supreme Court of the United States allowed Federal Reserve Governor Lisa Cook to remain pending review of Trump's removal attempt. By declining immediate removal of a Fed governor, the Court temporarily protected central bank independence from direct presidential firing, pending full arguments. (1 Oct 2025)

15. federal courts blocked the Trump administration's attempt to reallocate FEMA disaster funds from 12 Democratic states. Stopping a politically skewed diversion of FEMA aid reinforced judicial checks on executive efforts to punish disfavored states through disaster funding. (30 Sep 2025)

16. federal judge William G. Young ruled that deporting legal residents for pro-Palestinian speech violated the First Amendment. Striking down speech-based deportation efforts affirmed that non-citizens share core free-speech protections, limiting executive use of immigration law to silence political views. (30 Sep 2025; 1 Oct 2025)

17. coalition of 20 states sued the Justice Department over a rule tying victim aid to immediate proof of immigration status. States challenged a rule that would deny services to sexual assault and domestic violence victims lacking instant status proof, arguing it undermined both victims' rights and state authority. (1 Oct 2025)

18. federal court ruled Trump's acting U.S. attorney for Nevada was unlawfully serving. Invalidating an acting U.S. attorney appointment underscored judicial enforcement of statutory limits on temporary appointments against executive overreach. (30 Sep 2025)

19. Supreme Court granted an emergency stay allowing DHS to proceed with ending TPS for Venezuelan and Haitian nationals. Letting DHS move forward with terminating Temporary Protected Status during appeal exposed thousands of residents to potential removal while litigation continues, reflecting deference to executive immigration policy. (3 Oct 2025)

20. Supreme Court Justice Brett Kavanaugh authored a ruling permitting racial profiling by ICE if citizens are released upon proof. Endorsing stops based on racial profiling so long as citizens are eventually released legitimized discriminatory enforcement practices within immigration policing. (2 Oct 2025)

21. Federal Election Commission canceled multiple scheduled open meetings and announced a closed meeting. Canceling several public FEC meetings while proceeding with a closed session reduced routine transparency around campaign-finance oversight during a volatile political period. (1 Oct 2025)

22. House Speaker Mike Johnson and Senate leadership failed to pass any funding bills, triggering and prolonging a federal shutdown. Repeated rejection of competing funding proposals and strategic recess decisions turned budget-making into partisan theater, culminating in a shutdown that disrupted core government functions. (30 Sep 2025; 1 Oct 2025; 3 Oct 2025)

23. Federal agencies including VA, HUD, DOJ, USDA, and Education used official communications to blame Democrats for the shutdown in apparent Hatch Act violations. Coordinated partisan messaging from multiple agencies during a funding lapse blurred the line between neutral administration and political campaigning using state resources. (30 Sep 2025; 1 Oct 2025; 2 Oct 2025)

24. Department of Education leadership altered furloughed employees' out-of-office emails to insert partisan blame for the shutdown. Forcing civil servants' automatic replies to carry partisan talking points compromised the nonpartisan character of the bureaucracy and likely violated Hatch Act norms. (1 Oct 2025; 3 Oct 2025)

25. Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth overhauled the Pentagon Inspector General's Office and personnel records policies. Restructuring the Defense Department's watchdog office while under investigation raised fears that oversight mechanisms were being weakened to shield senior officials from accountability. (30 Sep 2025)

26. Office of Management and Budget Director Russ Vought announced cancellation of \$8 billion in climate-related funding in Democratic-led states. Targeting climate programs in states with Democratic senators as part of shutdown strategy used administrative control of appropriations to punish political opponents' constituencies. (1 Oct 2025; 2 Oct 2025)

27. Federal courts issued rulings rebuking Trump administration actions on FEMA funds, deportations, and acting appointments. A cluster of decisions against FEMA reallocation, speech-based deportations, and invalid acting U.S. attorneys showed courts intermittently constraining executive overreach despite broader pressures. (30 Sep 2025; 1 Oct 2025)

28. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention solicited nominations for the Lead Exposure and Prevention Advisory Committee. Seeking expert members for a federal advisory body on lead exposure reflected routine use of scientific advisory structures to inform health policy. (2 Oct 2025)

29. President Trump withdrew the nomination of E.J. Antoni to lead the Bureau of Labor Statistics. Dropping a controversial, partisan nominee for BLS after bipartisan skepticism preserved some insulation of a key statistical agency from overt political capture. (30 Sep 2025; 1 Oct 2025; 2 Oct 2025)

30. Federal Election Commission announced a closed meeting to discuss

participation in civil actions. Scheduling a closed FEC meeting on litigation matters during a period of canceled open sessions highlighted the tension between confidentiality needs and public oversight of election enforcement. (1 Oct 2025)

31. Federal courts and regulators handled high-profile criminal and civil cases involving Sean Combs, Robert Morris, Tesla, and hate-crime sentencing. Sentencing and civil litigation in prominent abuse, corruption, and safety cases demonstrated ongoing operation of ordinary judicial processes alongside politicized matters. (30 Sep 2025; 2 Oct 2025; 3 Oct 2025)

32. Federal agencies and commissions held or noticed multiple technical rulemakings and advisory meetings across health, environment, labor, and communications. A wide array of routine regulatory actions—from EPA SIP approvals to FDA guidances and FCC meetings—continued to update technical rules and oversight frameworks despite broader political turmoil. (29 Sep 2025; 30 Sep 2025; 2 Oct 2025; 3 Oct 2025)

## Civil Rights and Dissent

1. FBI arrested a Texas man for online threats to shoot Pride parade participants. Charging an individual for violent threats against an LGBTQ+ event showed federal enforcement of laws protecting marginalized communities' safety and assembly. (27 Sep 2025)

2. President Trump and DHS launched Operation Midway Blitz, a large-scale immigration crackdown in Chicago. Deploying heavily armed ICE teams for mass arrests at a Chicago processing center, accompanied by protests and forceful responses, intensified the use of militarized tactics in immigration enforcement. (30 Sep 2025; 3 Oct 2025)

3. ICE and DHS deported long-settled southeast Asian refugees with old convictions. Stepped-up deportations of Hmong and Laotian refugees with decades-long U.S. ties uprooted communities and raised questions about proportionality and historical obligations. (29 Sep 2025)

4. ICE and DHS deported dozens of Iranians to Iran under a new deal with Tehran. Returning Iranians to a regime where they may face persecution, reportedly without full due process, highlighted human-rights risks in immigration diplomacy. (29 Sep 2025)

5. ICE and CoreCivic held families in harsh conditions at the South Texas Family Residential Center. Court filings describing unsafe, prison-like conditions and prolonged child detention at a family facility underscored systemic rights and welfare concerns in immigration custody. (30 Sep 2025)

6. Department of Justice sued Minnesota over its sanctuary city policies.

Challenging state and local limits on cooperation with ICE sought to curtail jurisdictions' ability to shield noncitizens from aggressive federal enforcement. (30 Sep 2025)

7. Department of Justice Civil Rights Division filed a FACE Act lawsuit against pro-Palestinian activists over a synagogue protest. Using a clinic-access law to police protest at a place of worship set a precedent that could broaden federal civil-rights tools into contentious political speech contexts. (30 Sep 2025)

8. ICE agents allegedly assaulted journalists at a New York immigration court. Reports that ICE officers injured reporters covering immigration proceedings pointed to direct physical risks for media documenting enforcement practices. (30 Sep 2025)

9. ICE conducted warrantless raids that twice detained a U.S. citizen from Alabama. A lawsuit over repeated detention of a citizen despite identification highlighted due-process violations and the civil-liberties costs of aggressive immigration sweeps. (30 Sep 2025; 2 Oct 2025)

10. ICE and FBI Director Kash Patel fired an FBI trainee for displaying a Pride flag at work. Dismissing a bureau employee over a Pride flag as "political signage" signaled intolerance for LGBTQ+ expression within federal law enforcement ranks. (1 Oct 2025; 2 Oct 2025)

11. Northwestern University blocked students from registering for classes for refusing mandatory antisemitism training. Conditioning course registration on completion of a contested, externally produced training video raised concerns about compelled speech and the boundaries of university discipline under federal funding pressure. (27 Sep 2025)

12. Utah Governor Spencer Cox publicly called for an end to political violence after high-profile attacks. A Republican governor's appeal to de-escalate rhetoric and violence acknowledged growing risks to civic peace and cross-partisan safety. (30 Sep 2025)

13. Louisiana authorities issued a warrant for a California doctor accused of mailing abortion pills into the state. Pursuing an out-of-state telemedicine provider for abortion pills illustrated post-Roe conflicts between states and the criminalization of cross-border reproductive care. (29 Sep 2025)

14. prosecutors in multiple states charged over 400 women with pregnancy-related crimes since Roe's overturning. The surge in pregnancy-related prosecutions, including homicide charges, reflected expanding use of criminal law to enforce fetal personhood at the expense of women's autonomy. (30 Sep 2025)

15. The Trump Administration determined Minnesota's policy allowing trans girls in sports violated federal law and threatened enforcement.

Declaring state inclusion policies for trans athletes unlawful and setting a short deadline for reversal used federal civil-rights enforcement levers against gender-identity protections. (30 Sep 2025)

16. The Trump Administration deported journalist Mario Guevara to El Salvador after arrest at a protest. Removing a long-time local reporter following a protest-related arrest, despite dismissed charges and U.S.-citizen children, raised fears of immigration tools being used to chill critical journalism. (3 Oct 2025)

17. federal labor unions sued to block mass firings of federal workers during the shutdown. Unions' legal challenge to shutdown-linked terminations sought to protect job security and collective rights against executive efforts to reshape the workforce unilaterally. (30 Sep 2025)

18. Fortune and federal agencies reported and implemented mass resignations of about 100,000 federal workers under a Deferred Resignation Program. Coordinated departures of tens of thousands of civil servants under a pressured program marked an unprecedented contraction of the federal workforce, with long-term implications for service delivery. (30 Sep 2025)

19. The Trump Administration and state prosecutors pursued aggressive immigration and pregnancy-related prosecutions while courts occasionally intervened. A pattern of harsh enforcement against immigrants, refugees, and pregnant women, tempered by some judicial pushback, illustrated deepening stratification of legal protections by status and identity. (1 Oct 2025; 2 Oct 2025; 3 Oct 2025)

20. Israeli naval forces intercepted the Global Sumud Flotilla and detained 450 activists including Greta Thunberg. Stopping an international flotilla bringing aid to Gaza and detaining activists in international waters raised concerns about the treatment of peaceful protest and humanitarian efforts under blockade enforcement. (1 Oct 2025)

21. Utah, Pennsylvania, and Michigan actors experienced politically tinged violence including killings and arson attacks. A series of violent incidents tied to political and religious tensions underscored rising risks to civic peace and minority communities. (29 Sep 2025; 30 Sep 2025)

## Economic Structure

1. The Trump Administration and congressional Republicans allowed a shutdown over disputes on ACA premium subsidies. Letting funding lapse amid conflict over health insurance subsidies disrupted federal operations and risked higher costs for millions, using access to care as leverage in fiscal negotiations. (28 Sep 2025; 1 Oct 2025)

2. White House and OMB estimated the shutdown would cost \$15 billion in GDP per week and threaten tens of thousands of jobs. Internal projections of large GDP losses and job cuts underscored that political brinkmanship over funding had substantial macroeconomic costs. (1 Oct 2025)

3. Pfizer and Trump administration agreed to provide discounted drugs via a federal website and most-favored-nation Medicaid pricing. A high-profile deal to cut drug prices for Medicaid and a federal portal showed the executive brokering direct arrangements with a major pharmaceutical firm to reshape pricing dynamics. (30 Sep 2025)

4. The Trump Administration canceled nearly \$8 billion in climate-related energy funding across multiple states. Terminating hundreds of climate and clean-energy awards, largely in non-Trump states, weakened decarbonization efforts and suggested partisan targeting of environmental investment. (1 Oct 2025; 2 Oct 2025)

5. OMB Director Russ Vought froze \$18 billion in New York City infrastructure projects over DEI concerns. Halting major transit projects on the grounds of opposing diversity-based contracting used federal purse strings to reshape local infrastructure priorities and equity policies. (1 Oct 2025; 3 Oct 2025)

6. OMB Director Russ Vought froze \$2.1 billion in federal funding for Chicago transit projects. Suspending funds for Chicago's subway expansions during a shutdown punished a Democratic city and jeopardized long-term mobility and employment gains. (2 Oct 2025; 3 Oct 2025)

7. The Trump Administration planned large bailout payments to farmers hurt by tariff policies. Designing multi-tens-of-billions in farm bailouts funded partly by tariff receipts shifted the costs of trade conflicts onto public accounts while cushioning a politically important sector. (2 Oct 2025)

8. The Trump Administration cut more than half of federal funding for a major homelessness program. Slashing HUD homelessness funds that support over 170,000 people risked increased housing insecurity, signaling reduced federal commitment to vulnerable populations. (29 Sep 2025)

9. Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services revoked Glenn Medical Center's critical access designation, leading to its closure. Strict enforcement of distance rules that forced closure of a rural California hospital left tens of thousands farther from emergency care, illustrating how technical criteria can reshape local health infrastructure. (30 Sep 2025)

10. The Trump Administration enforced a tax-and-spending provision that forced Wisconsin Planned Parenthood to suspend abortions. A federal funding restriction that penalized high-volume Medicaid abortion providers

pushed clinics to halt abortion services to preserve other care, limiting reproductive access for low-income patients. (1 Oct 2025)

ii. The Trump Administration implemented a shutdown that delayed the Labor Department's monthly jobs report. The lapse in funding postponed key employment data, complicating Federal Reserve decision-making and leaving markets and the public without timely labor indicators. (2 Oct 2025)

12. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission raised penalties for failing to post required anti-discrimination notices. Adjusting fines for notice-posting violations preserved the deterrent effect of civil-rights posting requirements against inflation. (30 Sep 2025)

13. Drug Enforcement Administration modernized controlled substances ordering and registration processes and adjusted stimulant production quotas. Moving ordering and registration online while increasing quotas for key ADHD medications aimed to improve regulatory efficiency and address shortages in controlled pharmaceuticals. (2 Oct 2025)

14. Environmental Protection Agency approved multiple state air and water plan revisions and extended coal plant notification deadlines. EPA actions updating SIPs, drinking water primacy, and coal effluent timelines adjusted environmental compliance obligations for states and utilities, with implications for pollution control and transition pacing. (2 Oct 2025)

15. Food and Drug Administration revoked EUAs for three COVID-19 vaccines and issued multiple patent and guidance decisions. Ending emergency authorizations for older COVID-19 vaccines and clarifying patent review periods and generic-drug guidances reshaped the regulatory and market landscape for vaccines and therapeutics. (29 Sep 2025; 30 Sep 2025; 1 Oct 2025; 2 Oct 2025; 3 Oct 2025)

16. General Services Administration sought comment on data collections for pricing, reporting, leasing, and construction payrolls. GSA's paperwork notices on transactional data, pricing disclosures, leasing, and payroll reporting aimed to balance contractor burden with transparency and oversight in federal procurement. (1 Oct 2025; 3 Oct 2025)

17. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention sought public comment on multiple surveillance and data collection programs. CDC notices on tobacco control, overdose deaths, HIV, vital statistics, and lab quality maintained data infrastructure essential for evidence-based public health policy. (30 Sep 2025; 2 Oct 2025)

18. DEA and private firms processed applications for controlled substance importation and manufacturing. Applications by Groff NA Hemplex and Cargill to handle Schedule I substances and GHB byproducts illustrated

ongoing regulation of industrial and research uses of controlled chemicals. (30 Sep 2025; 2 Oct 2025)

## **Information, Memory, and Manipulation**

1. President Trump posted and then deleted an AI-generated MedBed health-care video falsely promising miraculous cures. Sharing a fabricated policy video about fictional medical technology from an official account blurred the line between government communication and conspiracy content, undermining trust in health information. (27 Sep 2025; 28 Sep 2025; 29 Sep 2025)
2. President Trump spread false claims that hundreds of FBI agents acted as agitators on January 6. Alleging that undercover FBI agents incited the Capitol attack, contrary to official findings, sought to recast an insurrection as a government plot and erode confidence in law enforcement. (27 Sep 2025; 28 Sep 2025)
3. President Trump and the White House shared and replayed racist AI-generated deepfake videos of Chuck Schumer and Hakeem Jeffries. Using deepfakes to depict opposition leaders making fabricated racist and policy statements weaponized emerging technology to misinform the public and inflame prejudice. (29 Sep 2025; 30 Sep 2025; 2 Oct 2025)
4. Department of Housing and Urban Development posted a website banner blaming the “radical left” for the shutdown. Turning an agency homepage into a partisan blame message during a funding crisis used official channels to shape public perception rather than neutrally inform. (30 Sep 2025)
5. Department of Energy leadership instructed staff to avoid terms like “climate change” and “decarbonization”. Banning core scientific language from official communications suppressed accurate discussion of climate policy within a key energy agency, distorting the informational basis for public debate. (30 Sep 2025)
6. White House issued a press release claiming Tylenol use in pregnancy causes autism based on weak evidence. Overstating inconclusive research and omitting contrary studies in an official release misled the public on medical risk and undermined trust in evidence-based health guidance. (2 Oct 2025)
7. The Trump Administration suspended Voice of America news broadcasts and furloughed its journalists during the shutdown. Halting VOA operations, despite past practice of continuity, curtailed a major publicly funded news outlet at a moment of heightened need for independent information. (1 Oct 2025)

8. Apple, under pressure from the Trump administration removed ICE-tracking apps like IceBlock from its App Store. Pulling apps that helped communities monitor ICE activity, after government criticism, limited digital tools for public oversight of enforcement actions. (3 Oct 2025)

9. President Trump ordered government-wide investigations into activists and nonprofits labeled as domestic terrorists. Authorizing broad probes of groups associated with “antifa” under a domestic terrorism frame risked conflating dissent with extremism and chilling associational rights. (3 Oct 2025)

10. The Trump Administration and YouTube settled a lawsuit over Trump’s account suspension with a payment funding federal spaces and allied groups. A settlement that directed platform money to build a White House ballroom and support pro-Trump organizations blurred lines between content-moderation disputes and financial patronage. (29 Sep 2025)

11. The Trump Administration aggregated personal data from federal agencies, prompting a class action lawsuit. Centralizing citizen data across agencies raised fears of privacy violations and potential use of information to target or disenfranchise voters. (30 Sep 2025)

12. National Archives acting inspector general opened an investigation into the near-unredacted release of Rep. Mikie Sherrill’s military records. Probing a politically sensitive records release addressed concerns that archival disclosures were being weaponized against sitting lawmakers. (30 Sep 2025)

13. Department of Education and other agencies sent mass emails to employees blaming Democrats for the shutdown. Using internal communications to assign partisan blame for a funding lapse turned routine employee updates into instruments of political messaging. (1 Oct 2025; 2 Oct 2025)

14. Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth announced plans for widespread nondisclosure agreements and polygraph tests to find leakers. Requiring thousands of Pentagon personnel to sign NDAs and undergo random polygraphs risked chilling internal reporting and constraining information flows about defense policy. (1 Oct 2025)

15. The Trump Administration used declassification and historical framing to shape narratives about Wounded Knee and Earhart. Retaining Medals of Honor for Wounded Knee and spotlighting Earhart records amid contemporary scandals illustrated selective curation of history to emphasize heroic myths over accountability. (27 Sep 2025; 28 Sep 2025)

16. The Trump Administration and DOJ limited release of Epstein files while politicizing related narratives. Restricting further DOJ disclosures even as congressional Democrats released new documents kept key aspects of elite

misconduct opaque while allowing selective public framing. (27 Sep 2025; 28 Sep 2025)

17. The Trump Administration saturated the week with deepfakes, conspiracy medical advice, partisan banners, and shutdown-related blame. A cascade of misleading content from official and quasi-official channels created overlapping controversies that fragmented public attention and complicated accountability. (27 Sep 2025; 28 Sep 2025; 29 Sep 2025; 30 Sep 2025; 1 Oct 2025; 2 Oct 2025)



## CHAPTER 12

### **WEEK 38 (4 OCT 2025 – 10 OCT 2025): SHUTDOWN AS WEAPONRY**

*In a week of near-still clock hands, immigration crackdowns, shutdown tactics, and politicized prosecutions quietly tightened executive power and thinned democratic constraint.*

This was a tense week marked by authoritarian pressure, focusing on militarized domestic control, weaponization of federal law enforcement, and deliberate institutional sabotage amid a shutdown and external crises. The Trump administration aimed to normalize troop deployments into Democratic-led cities like Portland, Chicago, and Illinois overall, despite state objections, with explicit Insurrection Act references and a DOJ memo justifying lethal actions against drug boats. Courts consistently intervened to block or limit these deployments, but ongoing appeals and partial approvals indicate a ongoing tug-of-war over civil–military boundaries. Meanwhile, the Justice Department was openly repurposed against perceived enemies: dismissing and sidelining career prosecutors and FBI agents, indicting James Comey and New York AG Letitia James following Trump's demands, stripping the public integrity section, and stalling or obscuring corruption investigations (like those involving Tom Homan and Epstein files). Congress was paralyzed by a shutdown that the White House uses as leverage to cut Democratic-leaning programs and protections for federal workers, while House leaders refused to seat a duly elected member to block transparency regarding Epstein. Efforts to control information and spread disinformation—from vaccine-autism theories to attacks on media and academics—strengthened a chaos strategy

that overwhelms accountability, even as civil society, state officials, and some judges resist visibly.

## Power and Authority

1. President Trump ordered a military strike on a boat off Venezuela under a disputed armed-conflict theory. By framing drug cartels as armed enemies to justify a strike on a Venezuelan boat, the president stretched war powers in ways that bypass normal congressional and legal checks on the use of force. (4 Oct 2025)

2. President Trump issued an ultimatum to Hamas to accept his Gaza peace plan by a set deadline. The ultimatum centralized high-stakes foreign-policy decision-making in the presidency, limiting space for broader diplomatic or legislative input on war-and-peace questions. (4 Oct 2025)

3. President Trump called for the removal of New York Attorney General Letitia James on social media. A former president's public demand to oust a sitting state attorney general for pursuing cases against him signaled willingness to delegitimize independent law enforcement to protect personal interests. (4 Oct 2025)

4. President Trump ordered deployment of Illinois National Guard troops to protect federal facilities. Authorizing state Guard units for domestic law-enforcement roles expanded presidential control over military resources inside the country, testing limits on federal use of force in civilian settings. (6 Oct 2025)

5. President Trump publicly supported continuing the federal government shutdown to force cuts to Democratic programs. Backing a prolonged shutdown as leverage to slash political opponents' programs used control over basic government operations as a partisan weapon rather than a neutral governing tool. (9 Oct 2025)

6. President Trump called for the arrest of the Chicago mayor and Illinois governor over immigration enforcement disputes. Urging the arrest of elected state leaders for policy disagreements signaled readiness to criminalize political opposition, undermining norms that protect pluralism and federalism. (9 Oct 2025)

7. White House officials led by Stephen Miller discussed invoking the Insurrection Act to deploy troops domestically. Internal talks about using the Insurrection Act to send troops into U.S. cities normalized extraordinary military powers as a tool for managing domestic unrest and political conflict. (9 Oct 2025)

8. President Trump announced that the second Monday in October would

be recognized nationally as Columbus Day. Creating a national holiday around a contested historical figure allowed the presidency to shape official civic symbolism and public memory in line with its preferred narrative. (9 Oct 2025)

9. President Trump announced plans to impose or expand tariffs on Chinese imports, triggering market declines. Threatening sweeping tariffs on China concentrated major trade and economic decisions in the executive, with immediate effects on markets and limited legislative oversight. (9 Oct 2025; 10 Oct 2025)

10. President Trump reiterated debunked claims linking vaccines to autism during high-level meetings. Using the presidential platform to repeat false vaccine-autism claims undermined expert agencies and distorted public understanding of health risks for political or ideological gain. (9 Oct 2025)

11. President Trump ordered a military strike on a Colombian boat mistakenly believed to be Venezuelan. A misdirected strike that likely hit a Colombian vessel highlighted the dangers of unilateral executive control over lethal force with limited transparency or accountability to Congress or allies. (9 Oct 2025)

12. President Trump announced a deal with AstraZeneca trading lower Medicaid drug prices for tariff relief. Linking drug pricing concessions to tariff relief showed how the executive can unilaterally bargain economic regulation and trade policy, with limited legislative input into distributional consequences. (10 Oct 2025)

## **Institutions and Governance**

1. House Speaker Mike Johnson delayed and effectively blocked the swearing-in of Representative-elect Adelita Grijalva. Postponing a duly elected member's swearing-in, apparently to affect votes on releasing Epstein-related files, used procedural control of membership to shape oversight and transparency outcomes. (4 Oct 2025; 7 Oct 2025; 9 Oct 2025)

2. Senate Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Committee released a report detailing harmful cuts and privacy risks by the Department of Government Efficiency. The report documented how an executive department's sweeping cuts degraded vital services and weakened cybersecurity and privacy safeguards, illustrating risks when administrative restructuring lacks oversight. (4 Oct 2025)

3. Federal courts issued multiple orders blocking or limiting National Guard deployments to Oregon and Portland. Judges repeatedly halted attempts to federalize or deploy Guard units to Portland, reinforcing judicial

checks on domestic military use and insisting on factual and legal justification. (4 Oct 2025; 5 Oct 2025; 6 Oct 2025; 7 Oct 2025; 8 Oct 2025; 9 Oct 2025)

4. U.S. District Judge Rudolph Contreras issued a temporary restraining order blocking ICE from automatically detaining immigrant youths as adults at 18. The order enforced prior protections requiring least-restrictive placements for immigrant youths, curbing an executive attempt to expand detention without individualized assessments. (4 Oct 2025)

5. U.S. District Judge Waverly Crenshaw rebuked the Justice Department for a potentially vindictive prosecution of Kilmar Abrego Garcia. Judicial criticism of a case that appeared retaliatory against an immigrant who had previously won in court highlighted the role of judges in policing prosecutorial abuse. (4 Oct 2025)

6. Federal court ruled the Trump administration's attempt to end birthright citizenship unconstitutional. By striking down an effort to curtail birthright citizenship, the court upheld constitutional guarantees against unilateral executive redefinition of who counts as a citizen. (4 Oct 2025)

7. Illinois Governor J.B. Pritzker and state officials filed lawsuits challenging federal deployment and federalization of National Guard troops to Illinois. Illinois' legal challenges to Guard deployments asserted state sovereignty against federal attempts to insert troops into local law enforcement, testing federalism boundaries. (6 Oct 2025; 7 Oct 2025; 8 Oct 2025; 9 Oct 2025)

8. U.S. Supreme Court declined to hear Ghislaine Maxwell's appeal, leaving her sex-trafficking conviction intact. Refusing to revisit Maxwell's conviction maintained accountability in a high-profile trafficking case, even as political actors floated clemency that could undercut judicial outcomes. (5 Oct 2025; 6 Oct 2025; 7 Oct 2025)

9. Federal and state courts in South Carolina issued and then reversed an injunction blocking release of state voter files to DOJ. The temporary block and later reversal on releasing detailed voter files illustrated judicial involvement in balancing voter privacy against federal claims of election-integrity enforcement. (6 Oct 2025)

10. U.S. Supreme Court opened a term with cases on voting rights, mail-in ballots, conversion therapy, tariffs, and agency independence. The Court's docket, including challenges to the Voting Rights Act, mail-ballot rules, LGBTQ protections, tariffs, and Federal Reserve independence, positioned it to reshape core democratic rules and economic governance. (6 Oct 2025; 7 Oct 2025; 8 Oct 2025; 9 Oct 2025)

11. Federal appeals court judges paused a closure order and allowed the Alligator Alcatraz immigration detention facility to remain open. By keeping a controversial detention center operating despite findings of rights and envi-

ronmental violations, appellate judges signaled deference to enforcement priorities over detainee protections. (7 Oct 2025)

12. U.S. District Judge April Perry declined to immediately block and later temporarily halted National Guard deployment to Chicago. Perry's evolving rulings first allowed, then paused, Guard deployments, underscoring judicial gatekeeping over when federal military forces may operate in local jurisdictions. (6 Oct 2025; 7 Oct 2025; 9 Oct 2025; 10 Oct 2025)

13. Illinois and Chicago officials sued the Trump administration to block National Guard deployments to the city. The joint lawsuit framed federal troop deployments as part of a declared “war” on the state, using courts to contest executive encroachment on local policing authority. (8 Oct 2025)

14. Federal courts issued orders limiting federal agents' use of force and protecting journalists in Illinois. Injunctions restricting crowd-control weapons and barring arrests of journalists without probable cause imposed judicial constraints on federal enforcement tactics during protests. (9 Oct 2025; 10 Oct 2025)

15. Federal courts and prosecutors indicted former FBI Director James Comey on charges of lying to Congress, which he contested as political. Charging a former FBI director after presidential calls to prosecute him blurred lines between neutral law enforcement and political retribution, raising concerns about DOJ independence. (7 Oct 2025; 8 Oct 2025; 10 Oct 2025)

16. Federal prosecutors in Virginia declined to find probable cause against New York Attorney General Letitia James before a later indictment. Career prosecutors' initial refusal to charge Letitia James, followed by a politically connected U.S. attorney securing an indictment, highlighted internal resistance to perceived politicized prosecutions. (6 Oct 2025)

17. U.S. Attorney Lindsey Halligan and a federal grand jury indicted New York Attorney General Letitia James on bank fraud and false-statement charges. Indicting a state attorney general who had pursued civil fraud cases against Trump, led by a prosecutor closely tied to him, deepened fears that federal charging power was being weaponized against political adversaries. (9 Oct 2025; 10 Oct 2025)

18. Texas Court of Criminal Appeals stayed the execution of Robert Roberson and ordered a new hearing under the state's junk science law. Pausing an execution to reassess contested forensic evidence showed a state court using statutory tools to correct potential miscarriages of justice in capital cases. (9 Oct 2025)

19. U.S. Supreme Court heard arguments in a challenge to Illinois' mail-in ballot counting window. The case on whether ballots postmarked by election

day can be counted later could reshape how states administer mail voting and who has standing to contest those rules. (8 Oct 2025)

20. U.S. Supreme Court heard arguments in Louisiana v Callais on the Voting Rights Act's Section 2. Reconsidering the legality of majority-minority districts under Section 2 of the Voting Rights Act put federal protections for minority representation and anti-gerrymandering standards at risk. (9 Oct 2025)

21. Attorney General Pam Bondi appeared before the Senate Judiciary Committee and refused to answer many oversight questions. Bondi's stonewalling on topics including disbanded DOJ units, Epstein files, and alleged favoritism toward Trump allies signaled resistance to legislative oversight of law enforcement politicization. (6 Oct 2025; 7 Oct 2025; 8 Oct 2025)

22. Former Department of Justice officials issued an open letter warning that the administration was undermining DOJ integrity. The letter from 282 former DOJ officials described court-order violations and dismantling of anti-corruption units, documenting internal alarm over the department's politicization. (6 Oct 2025; 7 Oct 2025)

23. Department of Justice leadership under Pam Bondi stripped the public integrity section of staff and authority. Weakening the DOJ unit responsible for investigating corruption by public officials reduced institutional capacity to hold powerful actors accountable. (7 Oct 2025)

24. Department of Justice under President Trump dropped an investigation into border czar Tom Homan despite bribery allegations. Closing a probe into alleged pay-to-play contracting by a senior immigration official, while DOJ later argued pardons conferred broad immunity, suggested selective leniency for insiders. (6 Oct 2025; 7 Oct 2025)

25. FBI and DOJ leadership fired or reassigned agents and prosecutors involved in investigations related to Trump. Removing or sidelining personnel tied to Trump-related probes, including senior national security prosecutors and FBI agents, signaled politicized control over investigative staffing. (4 Oct 2025; 8 Oct 2025)

26. Office of Management and Budget issued guidance suggesting furloughed federal workers might not receive guaranteed back pay. Reinterpreting a 2019 law to cast doubt on automatic back pay for furloughed employees used administrative guidance to weaken statutory worker protections during shutdowns. (7 Oct 2025; 8 Oct 2025)

27. White House Office of Management and Budget announced plans to use the shutdown to implement large cuts to infrastructure and climate projects. Leveraging a shutdown to cancel targeted projects and lay off federal

workers turned budget execution into a unilateral tool for reshaping policy without normal appropriations debate. (7 Oct 2025)

28. U.S. Senate repeatedly failed to pass competing bills to end the government shutdown. The Senate's inability to agree on funding legislation prolonged a shutdown that disrupted federal services and pay, underscoring legislative gridlock over core governing functions. (7 Oct 2025; 8 Oct 2025; 9 Oct 2025)

29. House Speaker Mike Johnson and House Republican leadership kept the House in recess during the shutdown while blaming opponents and offering no resolution plan. Maintaining recess amid a shutdown and using it as leverage against Senate Democrats turned the House into a stage for pressure rather than a venue for problem-solving. (7 Oct 2025; 9 Oct 2025)

30. Federal Housing Finance Agency Director Bill Pulte made criminal referrals directly to DOJ in apparent violation of internal ethics procedures. By bypassing his agency's inspector general to send criminal referrals, the FHFA director blurred lines between independent oversight and politically influenced enforcement. (6 Oct 2025)

31. Democracy Forward sued the FBI and DOJ for failing to comply with a FOIA request about alleged Tom Homan bribery. The FOIA lawsuit sought to force disclosure of records on alleged corruption by a senior official, highlighting how litigation is needed to overcome executive secrecy. (6 Oct 2025)

32. Attorney General Pam Bondi and DOJ released selected records from Jack Smith's Trump investigation while withholding other details. Publishing selective investigative records that aided political narratives, while resisting broader transparency, showed how document releases can be curated to shape public perception of accountability. (6 Oct 2025)

33. Attorney General Pam Bondi and FBI leadership failed to produce the Epstein client list and allegedly ordered agents to flag records mentioning Trump. Withholding key Epstein records and reportedly singling out references to Trump suggested the justice system was shielding politically sensitive information from scrutiny. (6 Oct 2025; 7 Oct 2025)

34. CIA Deputy Director demoted the acting general counsel and assumed the role personally. The unusual move to combine operational and legal authority inside the CIA raised concerns about internal checks and the independence of legal advice in intelligence operations. (6 Oct 2025)

35. Federal judge ordered the Pentagon to disclose information about Elon Musk's security clearances to a newspaper. Requiring transparency on a powerful contractor's clearances underscored judicial willingness to subject national-security arrangements involving influential individuals to public scrutiny. (8 Oct 2025)

36. Federal Emergency Management Agency reimbursed Florida \$608 million for the Alligator Alcatraz detention facility and related projects. Large federal reimbursement for a controversial state-run detention complex blurred lines between state and federal responsibility and bolstered a facility facing legal challenges. (7 Oct 2025)

37. U.S. Senate voted against requiring congressional approval before deadly force is used against drug cartels. Rejecting a requirement for prior authorization on lethal force against cartels preserved broad presidential discretion over targeted killings, limiting legislative oversight of war powers. (9 Oct 2025)

38. Federal judge blocked National Guard deployment to Portland after the city was labeled “war-ravaged”. The ruling rejected exaggerated executive narratives about urban unrest as a basis for military deployment, reinforcing evidentiary standards for invoking emergency powers. (9 Oct 2025)

39. Federal judge paused an order on federalizing Oregon Guard members but kept a ban on their deployment to Portland. The appeals decision allowed some federal control over Guard status while still blocking their use in Portland, reflecting nuanced judicial calibration of executive and state powers. (8 Oct 2025)

40. Federal judge scheduled a ruling on the legality of National Guard deployment in Chicago amid constitutional challenges. The pending decision on Guard deployments in Chicago underscored how courts mediate disputes over domestic military use and state consent. (9 Oct 2025)

41. Federal judge ordered a 14-day halt on National Guard deployment to Chicago for lack of evidence of rebellion. Finding no credible basis for invoking insurrection-like powers, the court temporarily blocked Guard deployments, reinforcing legal thresholds for extraordinary domestic force. (9 Oct 2025; 10 Oct 2025)

42. U.S. Supreme Court agreed to consider Alex Jones’s petition to block a massive defamation judgment. The Court’s potential review of a huge defamation award against a prominent conspiracy theorist could recalibrate the balance between free expression and accountability for harmful lies. (9 Oct 2025)

43. New Jersey gubernatorial candidate Jack Ciattarelli announced plans to sue his opponent for defamation over opioid-related accusations. Threatening defamation litigation in a heated campaign illustrated how civil courts can be invoked as tools in political messaging battles. (10 Oct 2025)

44. Federal judge ordered a hearing on detainees’ access to legal representation at Alligator Alcatraz. The lawsuit over blocked attorney access at a

large detention facility highlighted judicial oversight of due process in immigration detention. (7 Oct 2025)

45. Federal judge ordered the Pentagon to share Musk security-clearance information with the press. Compelling disclosure about a powerful contractor's clearances reinforced that even high-profile figures are subject to transparency norms in security governance. (8 Oct 2025)

## Civil Rights and Dissent

1. ICE and federal agents in Chicago used tear gas, pepper balls, and physical force against protesters, journalists, and local officials. Escalating force against demonstrators and media at an ICE facility curtailed First Amendment rights and blurred lines between immigration enforcement and protest suppression. (4 Oct 2025; 5 Oct 2025; 6 Oct 2025; 9 Oct 2025)

2. Federal agents in Portland pepper-sprayed a peaceful protester in a frog costume outside an ICE facility. Using chemical agents on a nonviolent demonstrator illustrated disproportionate tactics that can chill lawful protest and normalize aggressive responses to dissent. (4 Oct 2025)

3. Illinois Governor J.B. Pritzker ordered state agencies to evaluate treatment of children during a federal immigration raid. The directive sought accountability for potential abuses of minors in a federal operation, reflecting state-level efforts to protect vulnerable residents from heavy-handed enforcement. (4 Oct 2025)

4. Kristi Noem as Homeland Security Secretary threatened heavy immigration enforcement presence at the 2026 Super Bowl. Warning that ICE agents would be "all over" a major public event signaled use of immigration enforcement to intimidate noncitizens and chill their participation in civic life. (5 Oct 2025)

5. President Trump and DOJ ordered a crackdown on alleged "leftwing terrorism" targeting donors like George Soros and Reid Hoffman. Directing law enforcement scrutiny at opposition-aligned donors without clear evidence blurred the line between security policy and intimidation of political financing. (5 Oct 2025)

6. ICE agents at Broadview detention facility allegedly made false 911 calls that drained local police resources. Fabricated emergency calls by federal officers strained local services and eroded trust, compounding tensions around aggressive immigration enforcement. (5 Oct 2025)

7. Texas Governor Greg Abbott and President Trump deployed Texas National Guard troops to Illinois and Oregon for immigration enforcement support. Sending state troops across borders to back federal crackdowns on

immigrants expanded militarized enforcement into communities that opposed such deployments. (5 Oct 2025; 7 Oct 2025; 8 Oct 2025; 9 Oct 2025)

8. President Trump delivered a partisan speech to Navy personnel alleging a rigged 2016 election. Injecting partisan grievances and election-fraud claims into a military commemoration blurred civil-military boundaries and risked politicizing the armed forces' culture. (5 Oct 2025)

9. Coalition of journalists, nonprofits, and unions sued the Trump administration over alleged brutality at protests. The lawsuit argued that federal agents used violence to intimidate protesters and the press, seeking judicial protection for core expressive freedoms. (6 Oct 2025)

10. Coalition of 282 former DOJ officials publicly criticized the administration's degradation of DOJ and targeting of public servants. Their open letter warned that politicized law enforcement was chilling independent public service and undermining equal application of the law. (6 Oct 2025; 7 Oct 2025)

11. CDC and RFK Jr.-aligned officials announced a review of the childhood immunization schedule. Reopening settled vaccine schedules under leadership skeptical of vaccines risked weakening protections for children and communities against preventable disease. (9 Oct 2025)

12. Texas Attorney General Ken Paxton arrested and charged a midwife and others under strict state abortion laws. Aggressive enforcement of near-total abortion bans against providers and staff further constrained reproductive autonomy and signaled harsh penalties for those assisting patients. (8 Oct 2025)

13. Federal prosecutors brought trial against anti-abortion activists for invading a Pennsylvania clinic. Prosecuting activists who blocked access to a clinic tested enforcement of laws protecting reproductive health facilities amid intense political conflict over abortion. (9 Oct 2025)

14. The Trump Administration and DHS reassigned hundreds of national security specialists and FBI agents to immigration enforcement. Mass reassignments shifted federal capacity toward immigration crackdowns at the expense of other threats, deepening the securitization of migration and affecting civil liberties. (8 Oct 2025; 9 Oct 2025)

15. Pentagon investigated nearly 300 employees for online comments critical of Charlie Kirk after his killing. Scrutinizing employees' social-media remarks about a political figure risked chilling personal expression and conflating private speech with disloyalty. (8 Oct 2025)

16. The Trump Administration and right-wing commentators held a roundtable discussing criminalizing flag burning. Exploring laws against flag

burning, a form of protected speech, signaled interest in narrowing First Amendment protections for symbolic political expression. (8 Oct 2025)

17. Chicago protesters and supporting organizations organized a large peaceful demonstration that shut down Michigan Avenue. The mass protest demonstrated robust civic mobilization and the continued exercise of assembly rights despite aggressive federal enforcement in the region. (9 Oct 2025)

18. House Republican leaders including Mike Johnson and Tom Emmer labeled upcoming “No Kings” protests as terrorism and anti-American. Branding planned demonstrations as terrorist or anti-American activity framed dissent as a security threat, potentially justifying harsher responses and stigmatizing protest. (9 Oct 2025)

19. Meidas and protest organizers planned a “No Kings” protest against perceived authoritarian overreach. Organizing a national protest explicitly opposing authoritarian tendencies reflected civil society’s role in contesting power grabs and defending democratic norms. (10 Oct 2025)

20. Illinois Governor J.B. Pritzker warned that the administration might militarize polling places in future elections. The warning highlighted fears that federal troops could be used to intimidate voters or influence election administration, threatening free and fair voting conditions. (9 Oct 2025)

21. Texas and federal immigration agents shot Marimar Martinez during an immigration enforcement operation in Chicago. The disputed shooting of a woman during a vehicle chase underscored concerns about excessive force and accountability in aggressive immigration crackdowns. (7 Oct 2025)

22. The Trump Administration and ICE deported activists from the Global Sumud Flotilla after harsh detention conditions. Reports of mistreatment and deterrent rhetoric toward humanitarian activists highlighted how security operations can infringe on rights of those engaged in political and humanitarian action. (4 Oct 2025)

23. Israeli authorities detained and deported Global Sumud Flotilla activists under harsh conditions. The treatment of foreign activists seeking to aid Gaza raised broader concerns about how states respond to transnational solidarity efforts and dissent. (4 Oct 2025)

24. Texas courts and prosecutors pursued charges in a high-profile “shaken baby” death penalty case amid new science. The stay of execution and review under a junk-science law reflected ongoing struggles to align criminal punishment with evolving scientific standards, affecting defendants’ rights. (9 Oct 2025)

## Economic Structure

1. U.S. Treasury Department advanced plans to mint a Trump dollar coin despite legal limits on living presidents on currency. Proceeding with a coin featuring a sitting president's image blurred statutory boundaries around currency design and used monetary symbolism for personal glorification. (4 Oct 2025)

2. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention leadership removed the universal COVID-19 vaccine recommendation and altered other vaccine guidance. Changing vaccine schedules in ways aligned with political pressure rather than clear scientific consensus risked undermining trust in public-health regulation. (6 Oct 2025; 9 Oct 2025)

3. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention updated COVID-19 vaccine recommendations to expand access while dropping a combined MMR-varicella shot. The mixed changes to childhood immunization schedules affected how public goods in health are delivered, with implications for equity and disease control. (7 Oct 2025)

4. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention called for separate MMR vaccines despite an ongoing measles outbreak. Recommending separate shots for measles, mumps, and rubella during an outbreak risked complicating delivery and lowering uptake of a key preventive service. (9 Oct 2025)

5. White House Office of Management and Budget canceled funding for energy and transportation projects in Democratic-led areas during the shutdown. Targeted cancellations of infrastructure and energy funding during a shutdown used budgetary power to punish political opponents and reshape economic development patterns. (7 Oct 2025)

6. Office of Management and Budget quietly revised guidance to remove references to guaranteed back pay for furloughed workers. Editing guidance to downplay statutory back-pay guarantees increased economic insecurity for federal workers and strengthened executive leverage in shutdown negotiations. (7 Oct 2025)

7. The Trump Administration considered selling portions of the federal student loan portfolio to private markets. Exploring privatization of \$1.6 trillion in student debt would shift a major public financing tool into profit-driven hands, affecting borrower protections and access to education. (7 Oct 2025)

8. President Trump and OMB floated selectively granting back pay only to some furloughed federal employees. Suggesting merit-based or selective back pay for furloughed workers threatened equal treatment norms in public employment and opened space for partisan favoritism. (7 Oct 2025)

9. U.S. Department of Commerce announced 92% tariffs on Italian pasta manufacturers after a dumping investigation. Imposing steep tariffs on a major import sector altered trade flows and raised questions about how trade remedies are used in broader economic and diplomatic strategy. (9 Oct 2025)

10. President Trump announced a 100% tariff on all Chinese imports, sharply moving markets. Declaring across-the-board tariffs on Chinese goods concentrated immense power over trade and supply chains in the executive, with immediate consequences for global and domestic economies. (9 Oct 2025; 10 Oct 2025)

11. Environmental Protection Agency requested public comment on reconsidering the carbon tetrachloride risk-management rule. Reopening a toxic-substances rule after legal challenges showed how regulatory standards for workplace and environmental safety can be revisited under pressure from litigation and stakeholders. (9 Oct 2025)

12. Chinese central government began bailing out banks and local governments hit by a real estate bust. Large-scale bailouts to stabilize China's financial system illustrated how state intervention can socialize losses from private and local risk-taking, with implications for global markets. (10 Oct 2025)

13. China's economic regulators announced measures to curb disorderly price competition among companies. New rules to police aggressive price-cutting aimed to manage deflation and capital misallocation, showing a state-directed approach to market structure and competition. (10 Oct 2025)

14. The Trump Administration and Scott Bessent announced a \$20 billion currency-swap framework with Argentina's central bank. Providing large-scale liquidity support to Argentina shortly before its midterms raised questions about how U.S. financial tools can influence foreign political and economic outcomes. (9 Oct 2025)

15. U.S. Congresswoman Ilhan Omar and Democratic colleagues introduced a bill to reimburse federal workers' childcare costs during the shutdown. The proposal sought to mitigate shutdown harms for federal employees, highlighting legislative efforts to buffer workers from political brinkmanship over budgets. (8 Oct 2025)

16. U.S. government shutdown negotiators in Congress and the White House remained deadlocked over funding, with disputes tied to ACA tax credits and Medicaid cuts. The stalemate over reopening government, intertwined with fights over healthcare subsidies and social spending, left essential services and workers' livelihoods hostage to partisan bargaining. (7 Oct 2025; 9 Oct 2025)

17. House Speaker Mike Johnson and former President Trump pushed for rolling back the Affordable Care Act and cutting Medicaid and social

programs. Plans to dismantle major health and safety-net programs would shift economic risk onto poorer and sicker populations, deepening inequality in access to basic services. (7 Oct 2025)

18. U.S. Department of Commerce and FEMA channeled federal funds and trade tools in ways that advantaged certain states and industries. Tariffs, reimbursements, and shutdown-era cancellations collectively showed how federal economic levers can be used to reward allies and penalize disfavored regions or sectors. (7 Oct 2025; 9 Oct 2025)

## Information, Memory, and Manipulation

1. White House communications staff altered the process for selecting reporters in the press corps. Changing how reporters gain access to briefings risked favoring sympathetic outlets and limiting critical questioning, weakening media scrutiny of the executive. (4 Oct 2025)

2. President Trump posted a video depicting political opponents as zombies. Using dehumanizing imagery against opponents on official channels contributed to a hostile information environment that normalizes treating rivals as enemies rather than legitimate competitors. (4 Oct 2025)

3. President Trump attacked Rev. Al Sharpton, NBC, and Comcast's chair while suggesting license reviews. Threatening broadcast licenses in response to critical coverage signaled willingness to use regulatory levers to pressure or punish independent media. (5 Oct 2025)

4. President Trump repeated a false claim that he warned about Osama bin Laden before 9/11. Recycling a debunked story about prescient warnings rewrote his personal record and distorted public understanding of past security failures. (5 Oct 2025)

5. The Trump Administration and Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth expanded efforts to crack down on Pentagon press leaks and imposed new reporter restrictions. Tightening controls on defense reporting and threatening leakers reduced transparency around military policy and discouraged whistleblowing to the press. (7 Oct 2025; 8 Oct 2025)

6. Pentagon Press Association publicly condemned new Defense Department restrictions on reporters. The association warned that new rules could criminalize routine journalism, underscoring growing tension between national-security agencies and press freedom. (8 Oct 2025)

7. President Trump called for jailing Illinois Governor Pritzker and Chicago Mayor Johnson on social media. Publicly demanding imprisonment of state leaders for policy disagreements used online rhetoric to delegitimize opponents and frame them as criminals. (7 Oct 2025)

8. The Trump Administration and RFK Jr. as HHS head promoted debunked claims linking vaccines to autism and suggested ongoing studies to prove them. High-level repetition of false vaccine-autism links from both the president and health leadership undermined scientific consensus and fueled distrust in public-health programs. (9 Oct 2025)

9. Attorney General Pam Bondi refused to disclose who ordered Epstein records flagged or whether they implicated Trump. Withholding basic information about how sensitive case files were handled deepened suspicion that the justice system was managing evidence to protect powerful figures. (6 Oct 2025; 7 Oct 2025; 8 Oct 2025)

10. House Republican leaders and allied commentators framed the planned “No Kings” protest as pro-Hamas and anti-American. Portraying a domestic protest as aligned with foreign enemies recast dissent as disloyalty, shaping public memory of opposition movements as threats rather than civic participation. (9 Oct 2025; 10 Oct 2025)

11. Oregon Republican Party and Trump allies used a fabricated image of South American unrest to depict Portland as chaotic. Sharing a composite foreign image as evidence of domestic “war zone” conditions helped justify proposed Guard deployments and exemplified disinformation in security debates. (7 Oct 2025)

12. Rutgers professor Mark Bray and federal authorities were involved in an incident where Bray was blocked from boarding a flight after anti-fascism work. Preventing an academic known for research on anti-fascism from traveling abroad, shortly after presidential threats against antifa, suggested potential use of security tools to pressure scholars. (10 Oct 2025)

13. Six former U.S. surgeons general publicly condemned RFK Jr.’s misinformation and mismanagement at HHS. Their bipartisan warning highlighted how politicized health messaging and disregard for evidence can erode public trust in expert institutions. (8 Oct 2025)

14. The Trump Administration and Nobel Peace Prize critics attacked the Norwegian Nobel Committee for not awarding the prize to Trump. Official criticism of an independent international body’s decision framed global recognition processes as biased against the regime, shaping supporters’ perceptions of external institutions. (10 Oct 2025)

15. Attorney General Pam Bondi and DOJ handled Epstein files and related records in opaque ways that prompted FOIA litigation. The combination of selective disclosures, record flagging, and FOIA resistance around Epstein materials suggested active curation of what the public can learn about elite misconduct. (6 Oct 2025; 7 Oct 2025)

16. The Trump Administration and Pentagon investigated employees’

online comments and cracked down on leaks after Charlie Kirk's killing. Monitoring staff speech and intensifying leak hunts in response to criticism narrowed acceptable discourse within government and discouraged internal dissent from reaching the public. (7 Oct 2025; 8 Oct 2025)

17. President Trump used a cabinet meeting to repeat false claims about a rigged 2016 election. Reasserting baseless election-rigging narratives in official settings undermined confidence in past and future electoral outcomes and normalized distrust of democratic processes. (5 Oct 2025)

18. The Trump Administration and CDC issued conflicting vaccine guidance amid political pressure and misinformation. The combination of politicized rhetoric and shifting technical recommendations blurred the line between science-based policy and narrative management, complicating public understanding. (6 Oct 2025; 7 Oct 2025; 9 Oct 2025)

## **CHAPTER 13**

### **WEEK 39 (11 OCT 2025 – 17 OCT 2025): SHUTDOWN AS WEAPONIZED GOVERNANCE**

*With Congress stalled, the White House turned budgets, law enforcement, and public memory into tools for punishing opponents and narrowing democratic space.*

This week marks a significant consolidation of executive power and a coordinated assault on multiple democratic safeguards. The administration weaponized law and bureaucracy against opponents, such as designating Antifa as a ‘terrorist’ group, launching a Soros RICO investigation, and indicting Bolton along with Comey and James. Simultaneously, it purged and restrained the civil service through mass layoffs, a broad federal hiring freeze, and loyalty-driven purges. Federal power and funds were openly used as partisan tools: shutdown-related layoffs and selective funding freezes disproportionately affected Democratic areas, while crony bailouts and foreign-policy deals with Qatar, Saudi Arabia, and Argentina fueled emoluments-style corruption. Civil liberties came under pressure through militarized immigration raids, threats to invoke the Insurrection Act, domestic troop deployments, and a new NSPM redefining dissent as extremism. Press freedom and academic independence faced attacks via Pentagon gag rules, defamation lawsuits, campus agreements, and student-media censorship. Meanwhile, courts, states, universities, unions, and media mounted significant resistance—blocking Guard deployments, layoffs, ICE abuses, H-1B fee increases, and Pentagon press restrictions—demonstrating that, although the push toward competitive authoritarianism is intense, institutions still oppose it but remain under strain.

## Power and Authority

1. President Trump signed a memo designating Antifa as a domestic terrorist organization. The memo used terrorism framing against a loosely defined leftist movement, expanding executive power to surveil and disrupt political opponents without clear statutory authority. (11 Oct 2025)

2. President Trump announced plans to impose 100% tariffs on Chinese imports. The unilateral tariff threat asserted presidential control over trade policy traditionally shared with Congress, risking economic disruption while testing limits on executive authority in economic governance. (11 Oct 2025)

3. President Trump exempted the AI sector and its supply chain from broad tariffs. Shielding AI from tariffs highlighted selective use of trade tools to favor strategic industries, concentrating state support in sectors aligned with national power and influential firms. (12 Oct 2025)

4. Vice President JD Vance said the administration was considering invoking the Insurrection Act to deploy National Guard in Democratic-led cities. Floating Insurrection Act deployment against unrest in opposition-run cities normalized extraordinary domestic military powers as a tool for managing protest and local governance. (12 Oct 2025)

5. President Trump issued an executive order guaranteeing Qatar's security and naming it a steadfast ally. Granting NATO-style security assurances to Qatar after major gifts and investments blurred lines between national security commitments and personal or financial ties. (14 Oct 2025)

6. President Trump ordered the firing of nearly all staff in the Office of Population Affairs. Gutting the office overseeing family-planning programs concentrated policy control in political appointees and threatened continuity of reproductive health services nationwide. (14 Oct 2025)

7. President Trump proclaimed Columbus Day as a celebration of the "original American hero". The proclamation advanced a white Christian nationalist narrative of U.S. history, using presidential symbolism to marginalize critical accounts of conquest and Indigenous suffering. (11 Oct 2025; 13 Oct 2025)

8. President Trump promoted an ideological shift away from the Social Security model of government. Framing social welfare as contrary to "rugged individualism" signaled an executive push to roll back the state's protective role, weakening support for broad-based social rights. (14 Oct 2025)

9. President Trump issued an executive order tightly restricting federal civilian hiring. The hiring order centralized staffing decisions in political hands and constrained agencies' ability to fill positions, increasing executive leverage over the civil service. (15 Oct 2025)

10. President Trump issued an executive order declaring that any armed attack on Qatar threatens U.S. peace and security. Extending a de facto security guarantee to Qatar without treaty ratification expanded presidential war-and-peace commitments outside normal congressional processes. (14 Oct 2025)

11. President Trump announced plans for a triumphal arch and privately funded White House ballroom in Washington. Leader-centric monuments and lavish renovations funded by private donors entwined personal glorification with public space, raising concerns about influence and symbolic dominance. (14 Oct 2025; 16 Oct 2025)

12. President Trump claimed authority to pay furloughed troops using future-year Pentagon funds despite legal doubts. By asserting power to repurpose appropriated defense funds without Congress, the president challenged statutory budget controls and expanded unilateral fiscal authority. (16 Oct 2025)

13. President Trump directed the Pentagon to reallocate research funds to cover military payroll during the shutdown. Redirecting research money to pay troops during a funding lapse prioritized military pay over legal appropriations processes, deepening executive control over budget execution. (11 Oct 2025; 14 Oct 2025; 17 Oct 2025)

14. President Trump fired independent inspectors general and other watchdogs viewed as disloyal. Removing internal watchdogs weakened institutional checks on executive misconduct and signaled that oversight roles depend on political loyalty. (16 Oct 2025)

15. President Trump pardoned January 6 rioters who assaulted police officers. Pardoning violent participants in an attack on Congress undermined accountability for political violence and encouraged future lawless action by regime-aligned actors. (16 Oct 2025)

16. President Trump purged career officials deemed disloyal from federal agencies. Targeted removals of nonpartisan staff further politicized the bureaucracy, eroding neutral expertise and entrenching loyalty-based governance. (16 Oct 2025)

17. President Trump announced a national strategy and NSPM redefining certain beliefs as indicators of violent extremism. The memorandum broadened security definitions to include ideological positions, enabling expanded surveillance and disruption of peaceful political and religious dissent. (16 Oct 2025)

18. President Trump deployed federal troops to U.S. cities in response to unrest. Domestic troop deployments blurred civil-military boundaries and

risked intimidating protesters and local officials, weakening civilian control norms. (11 Oct 2025; 16 Oct 2025)

19. President Trump announced lethal strikes on boats off Venezuela's coast in anti-drug operations. Repeated lethal actions in international waters, justified with limited transparency, expanded executive war-making and raised questions about proportionality and oversight. (14 Oct 2025; 15 Oct 2025)

20. President Trump authorized covert CIA operations, including lethal force, to pressure Venezuela's government. Secret authorization of lethal covert operations for regime change in Venezuela deepened opaque uses of force with minimal public or congressional scrutiny. (14 Oct 2025; 15 Oct 2025; 16 Oct 2025)

21. President Trump announced a \$20 billion bailout for Argentina later doubled to \$40 billion. The Argentina bailout, acknowledged as offering little U.S. benefit while aiding a hedge fund ally, illustrated executive use of public funds to favor connected investors. (15 Oct 2025)

22. President Trump agreed to a \$142 billion arms sale to Saudi Arabia following major Saudi investments in Trump-linked entities. The massive arms package intertwined U.S. security policy with private financial relationships, heightening concerns about emoluments and foreign influence. (14 Oct 2025)

23. President Trump accepted a \$400 million luxury jet from Qatar for use as Air Force One. Accepting an extravagant state gift tied to later policy shifts toward Qatar blurred personal enrichment and official decision-making in foreign relations. (14 Oct 2025)

24. President Trump oversaw a \$2 billion pre-sale of a Trump-linked stablecoin to a UAE state fund. The early stablecoin purchase by a foreign sovereign fund, followed by chip-export concessions, showed state policy intertwined with private digital-asset ventures tied to the president. (14 Oct 2025)

25. President Trump announced he had ordered destruction of a boat in the Caribbean, killing six people. Publicly touting lethal maritime action as a presidential decision highlighted personalized control over use of force with limited legal explanation. (14 Oct 2025)

26. President Trump announced a meeting with Vladimir Putin in Budapest to discuss ending the war in Ukraine. The planned summit signaled a personalized diplomatic approach to a major war, raising questions about alignment with broader democratic and alliance interests. (16 Oct 2025)

27. President Trump pressured Republican-led states to redraw congres-

sional maps to eliminate Democratic districts. Presidential pressure on states to gerrymander for partisan gain used informal power to tilt electoral structures in favor of the ruling party. (17 Oct 2025)

28. President Trump publicly attacked judges and called for impeachment of U.S. judges at the urging of El Salvador's president. Endorsing rhetoric to impeach judges over adverse rulings further eroded respect for judicial independence and encouraged politicized attacks on the courts. (12 Oct 2025)

29. President Trump used automated government email replies to blame Democrats for the shutdown. Using official email systems for partisan blame messaging violated norms against politicizing government resources and blurred lines between state communication and campaign propaganda. (11 Oct 2025)

30. President Trump announced a national strategy to investigate liberal groups as potential domestic terror networks. Targeting funding and investigations at ideologically defined "domestic terror networks" expanded executive tools to suppress dissenting civil society organizations. (11 Oct 2025)

31. President Trump directed the Justice Department to investigate George Soros' Open Society Foundations under RICO. Launching a RICO probe into a major philanthropic organization closely associated with opposition causes weaponized criminal law against a perceived political enemy. (11 Oct 2025)

32. President Trump announced a crackdown on legal immigration including a \$100,000 H-1B fee, refugee cuts, and law-enforcement powers for USCIS. Sweeping changes to legal immigration raised financial and enforcement barriers, stratifying access to residency and work by wealth and origin. (11 Oct 2025)

33. President Trump announced mass layoffs and threatened firing 4,200 federal employees during the shutdown. Using large-scale layoffs as leverage in a budget standoff turned federal employment into a bargaining chip, pressuring workers and Congress alike. (11 Oct 2025; 13 Oct 2025; 15 Oct 2025)

34. President Trump announced selective cancellation and freezing of over \$27 billion in federal funds, mostly in Democratic areas. Targeted funding cuts during the shutdown used federal spending power to punish political opponents and reshape regional resource distribution. (14 Oct 2025; 17 Oct 2025)

35. President Trump canceled federal funding for the Gateway Tunnel project between New York and New Jersey. Canceling a major, previously agreed infrastructure project undermined long-term planning and signaled that large public works can be reversed for short-term political reasons. (15 Oct 2025; 16 Oct 2025)

36. President Trump cut a \$20 million flood-protection grant for the

Alaska Native village of Kipnuk. Eliminating disaster-protection funding for a vulnerable Indigenous community prioritized budget cuts over basic safety, exacerbating inequality in climate resilience. (15 Oct 2025; 16 Oct 2025)

37. President Trump announced plans to change IRS leadership and investigative practices to target left-leaning groups and donors. Politicizing IRS criminal investigations threatened to turn tax enforcement into a tool against political opponents rather than a neutral application of law. (15 Oct 2025)

38. President Trump pressured universities to sign a federal higher-education compact tying funding to policy changes. Offering preferential funding in exchange for curbs on DEI and international students sought to align academic governance with executive ideology. (15 Oct 2025; 16 Oct 2025)

39. President Trump restricted press freedom through attacks on judges, universities, and media outlets. Broader efforts to delegitimize independent institutions and the press supported a climate where criticism of the executive is framed as disloyal or dangerous. (16 Oct 2025)

40. President Trump used shutdown chaos, raids, tariffs, and foreign strikes in overlapping fashion. The convergence of multiple self-generated crises fragmented public attention and complicated oversight, making it harder to hold the executive accountable. (11 Oct 2025; 13 Oct 2025; 14 Oct 2025; 15 Oct 2025; 16 Oct 2025; 17 Oct 2025)

## Institutions and Governance

1. U.S. Senate held repeated failed votes to end the government shutdown. Nine and then ten failed cloture votes on funding bills left the government partially closed for weeks, undermining basic governance and public services. (11 Oct 2025; 14 Oct 2025; 15 Oct 2025; 16 Oct 2025)

2. House Speaker Mike Johnson canceled House sessions for weeks during the shutdown. Keeping the House out of session during a major funding crisis stalled legislative problem-solving and limited oversight, contributing to institutional paralysis. (11 Oct 2025; 12 Oct 2025; 15 Oct 2025; 16 Oct 2025)

3. House Speaker Mike Johnson blocked the swearing-in of Representative-elect Adelita Grijalva by canceling sessions. Delaying an elected member's oath to prevent a discharge petition manipulated House procedure to weaken opposition representation and oversight. (14 Oct 2025; 15 Oct 2025)

4. House Speaker Mike Johnson admitted having no strategy to reopen the government during the shutdown. Publicly lacking a plan to end the

shutdown underscored legislative dysfunction and left millions exposed to service disruptions and higher health costs. (13 Oct 2025; 14 Oct 2025)

5. Senator Joni Ernst and the Trump administration advanced the sale of the Wilbur J. Cohen Federal Building. Selling a landmark building tied to Social Security's legacy symbolically and physically displaced a site commemorating social welfare, aligning with efforts to shrink the safety net. (14 Oct 2025)

6. North Carolina General Assembly enacted NC HB 307 and prompted organized political opposition. Passage of the contested law spurred new candidacies and organizing, illustrating how state legislation can reshape political participation and representation. (12 Oct 2025)

7. California Governor Gavin Newsom vetoed bills on PFAS cookware and admissions preferences for descendants of enslaved people. The vetoes slowed state efforts on environmental health and race-conscious admissions, reflecting cautious executive use of policy tools for reparative justice. (14 Oct 2025; 15 Oct 2025)

8. North Carolina Republican legislative leaders announced plans for mid-decade congressional redistricting to add a GOP seat. The planned redraw aimed to entrench partisan advantage in a closely divided state, raising concerns about racial gerrymandering and fair representation. (14 Oct 2025; 17 Oct 2025)

9. Senator Elizabeth Warren and colleagues introduced legislation to block the Argentina bailout. The bill challenged an executive bailout seen as benefiting a connected hedge fund, asserting congressional authority over large foreign financial commitments. (15 Oct 2025)

10. U.S. Supreme Court heard arguments in *Louisiana v. Callais* on Section 2 of the Voting Rights Act. The case could narrow protections against racially discriminatory maps, reshaping how minority voters can challenge dilution of their electoral power. (15 Oct 2025; 16 Oct 2025)

11. U.S. Supreme Court rejected Alex Jones's appeal of a \$1.4 billion defamation judgment. Letting the massive defamation award stand reinforced legal consequences for sustained harmful misinformation about public tragedies. (14 Oct 2025)

12. U.S. District Judge April Perry and the Seventh Circuit blocked deployment of federalized National Guard troops in Illinois while allowing them to remain under federal control. The rulings limited active use of federalized Guard forces in Chicago, preserving state and local authority over domestic military deployments. (11 Oct 2025; 12 Oct 2025; 17 Oct 2025)

13. U.S. District Judge Karin Immergut extended restraining orders preventing federalization and deployment of National Guard troops to Port-

land. Extending the block on Guard deployment maintained judicial checks on executive attempts to use military forces in domestic law enforcement. (15 Oct 2025)

14. U.S. District Judge Susan Illston and other federal judges temporarily blocked mass federal worker firings during the shutdown. Injunctions against politically motivated layoffs protected civil servants and affirmed that shutdowns cannot be used to circumvent employment protections. (15 Oct 2025)

15. federal courts issued orders limiting ICE and DHS practices in Illinois and on FEMA grants. Rulings blocking warrantless ICE arrests, coercive FEMA grant conditions, and abusive enforcement practices reinforced legal constraints on federal agencies. (12 Oct 2025; 14 Oct 2025)

16. federal courts ordered immigration officers in Chicago to wear body cameras during operations. Mandating body cameras for federal immigration officers sought to increase transparency and accountability after reports of excessive force and prior violations. (16 Oct 2025)

17. federal courts blocked the Trump administration from revoking New York City anti-terrorism transit funds. Calling the attempted revocation arbitrary and capricious preserved long-standing security funding and checked partisan use of grant allocations. (16 Oct 2025)

18. U.S. District Judge Sara Ellis issued temporary restraining orders protecting journalists and protesters from excessive force in Chicago. The orders limited arrests and use of riot-control weapons against journalists and demonstrators, reinforcing constitutional protections during aggressive federal operations. (11 Oct 2025; 13 Oct 2025)

19. federal courts handled multiple indictments and proceedings against John Bolton for mishandling classified information. The Bolton case highlighted tensions between enforcing classification laws and concerns that prosecutions may be used to punish prominent critics of the president. (11 Oct 2025; 15 Oct 2025; 16 Oct 2025; 17 Oct 2025)

20. President Trump and his legal team refiled and expanded a \$15 billion defamation lawsuit against the New York Times and others. Reviving a massive defamation suit after dismissal used civil courts to pressure a major news outlet, potentially chilling investigative reporting. (16 Oct 2025; 17 Oct 2025)

21. Arizona Attorney General Kris Mayes filed or threatened legal action to compel Speaker Johnson to swear in Representative-elect Grijalva. The move sought judicial enforcement of constitutional representation rights against partisan obstruction in House leadership. (14 Oct 2025; 16 Oct 2025)

22. Citizens for Responsibility and Ethics in Washington sued DHS and the National Archives over failure to preserve text-message records. The

lawsuit challenged systemic gaps in digital record-keeping, aiming to enforce transparency laws and prevent erasure of official communications. (15 Oct 2025)

23. Steady State, a group of former U.S. intelligence officers released a report warning that the U.S. is drifting toward competitive authoritarianism. The assessment by hundreds of former officials documented executive overreach and congressional failure, providing an expert alarm about systemic democratic erosion. (17 Oct 2025)

24. House Oversight Committee held testimony from Alexander Acosta on the Jeffrey Epstein plea deal. Questioning Acosta's past decisions revisited accountability for elite sexual abuse cases and the Justice Department's handling of powerful defendants. (17 Oct 2025)

25. Representative Robert Garcia demanded that Florida Attorney General Pam Bondi comply with subpoenas for Epstein-related files. The letter pressed a state official to stop obstructing congressional oversight into Epstein, highlighting conflicts between state resistance and federal transparency efforts. (17 Oct 2025)

26. Marjorie Taylor Greene and House Republicans pushed for release of Justice Department files on the Epstein case despite leadership resistance. Internal GOP pressure for transparency on Epstein clashed with leadership's reluctance, exposing fractures over how far to probe elite-linked scandals. (14 Oct 2025)

27. Texas legislature and University of Texas leadership disbanded faculty senates and centralized governance under administrators. Eliminating elected faculty senates reduced shared governance and may make universities more vulnerable to political interference in academic decisions. (17 Oct 2025)

28. California voters and officials advanced a ballot measure (Proposition 50) focused on gerrymandering reform. The measure aimed to curb partisan map-drawing, reflecting institutional efforts to protect fair representation through direct democracy. (17 Oct 2025)

29. Illinois Senators Dick Durbin and Tammy Duckworth were repeatedly denied access to the Broadview ICE facility. Blocking senators from inspecting a detention center undermined congressional oversight of immigration enforcement and facility conditions. (11 Oct 2025)

30. federal courts and local governments oversaw large settlements for clergy and public-employee sexual abuse claims. Major settlements in New Orleans and Los Angeles reflected belated institutional accountability for systemic abuse but also strained public budgets. (16 Oct 2025; 17 Oct 2025)

31. Mississippi residents and courts pursued litigation against Drax

Biomass over pollution in a low-income community. The environmental justice lawsuit challenged regulatory decisions that allowed increased emissions despite prior violations, testing protections for marginalized communities. (17 Oct 2025)

## Civil Rights and Dissent

1. Border Patrol and ICE agents conducted a military-style immigration raid in Chicago without visible warrants. The aggressive raid in a residential building raised serious Fourth Amendment and due-process concerns for immigrants and bystanders. (13 Oct 2025)

2. ICE and DHS dramatically increased arrests, conducted warrantless detentions, and were implicated in a fatal shooting in Chicago. Escalating enforcement and a deadly traffic-stop shooting highlighted patterns of excessive force and legal violations in immigration policing. (14 Oct 2025)

3. ICE and federal agents detained and allegedly abused queer and trans immigrants at a Louisiana facility. Legal complaints describing sexual abuse, coerced labor, and medical neglect against LGBTQ+ detainees exposed severe rights violations in federal custody. (16 Oct 2025)

4. ICE detained exonerated longtime resident Subramanyam Vedam for deportation based on vacated convictions. Targeting an exonerated man for removal underscored how rigid immigration rules can override justice-system corrections and long-term community ties. (15 Oct 2025)

5. ICE and local police in Arkansas detained Kapil Raghu after a wrongful drug arrest and revoked his visa. A mistaken narcotics arrest that cascaded into immigration detention and visa loss showed how errors and profiling can derail immigrants' lives. (16 Oct 2025)

6. ICE agents in Chicago fined a legal resident for not carrying registration documents under a rarely enforced law. Reviving an obscure documentation requirement against a 60-year-old resident signaled a harsher, more punitive approach to lawful immigrants. (13 Oct 2025)

7. The Trump Administration granted USCIS agents law-enforcement powers including arrests and warrant execution. Expanding enforcement authority to a benefits-focused agency blurred lines between service and policing, heightening risks for immigrants seeking legal status. (11 Oct 2025)

8. State Department revoked visas of foreigners who criticized Charlie Kirk after his killing. Using visa revocations in response to political speech abroad weaponized immigration policy against dissenting views. (14 Oct 2025)

9. The Trump Administration issued executive orders restricting DEI language in anti-trafficking work, prompting a lawsuit. Banning terms like

gender and race in federally funded trafficking programs constrained advocates' ability to address vulnerabilities of marginalized groups. (16 Oct 2025)

10. labor unions and civil-rights groups filed lawsuits challenging social media surveillance of visa holders and abusive ICE practices. Litigation against surveillance and detention abuses sought to defend privacy and due-process rights for immigrants and workers. (16 Oct 2025)

11. Illinois state police detained at least 15 protesters outside the Broadview ICE facility. Arrests of demonstrators in designated protest zones raised concerns about over-policing of immigration protests and limits on assembly. (17 Oct 2025)

12. U.S. veterans and federal prosecutors clashed over felony charges stemming from protests against ICE raids. Charging veterans protesting immigration enforcement with serious offenses highlighted the criminalization of dissent around federal operations. (13 Oct 2025)

13. federal agents in Chicago used pepper balls and riot-control measures on faith leaders and protesters. Reports of force against clergy and demonstrators during immigration protests underscored militarized responses to civil disobedience. (14 Oct 2025)

14. The Trump Administration and Republican leaders labeled upcoming "No Kings" pro-democracy rallies as hate-America or terrorist events. Smearing peaceful protests as extremist or pro-terrorist sought to delegitimize mass dissent and justify heightened security responses. (14 Oct 2025; 15 Oct 2025; 16 Oct 2025)

15. White House Press Secretary Karoline Leavitt described Democrats' base as "Hamas terrorists, illegal aliens, and violent criminals". Officially portraying the opposition's supporters as enemies of public safety inflamed polarization and framed political disagreement as a security threat. (17 Oct 2025)

16. Department of Homeland Security claimed narcoterrorists and domestic extremists were coordinating attacks on immigration officers. The narrative of coordinated violent plots by immigrants and activists bolstered justification for harsh enforcement and surveillance of dissent. (15 Oct 2025)

17. labor unions AFGE and AFSCME sought a temporary restraining order to stop federal worker layoffs during the shutdown. Unions turned to the courts to protect workers from politically driven reductions in force, defending labor rights within the federal workforce. (11 Oct 2025)

18. Democratic governors formed a public health alliance to coordinate disease tracking and vaccine access. The multistate alliance responded to federal funding cuts by building alternative structures to protect residents' health and access to vaccines. (15 Oct 2025)

19. New York Republican Party leaders disbanded the state's young Republican group after racist chats were exposed. Shutting down the youth organization signaled some institutional response to overt racism within party-affiliated groups. (15 Oct 2025; 16 Oct 2025)

20. Illinois Governor JB Pritzker released detailed tax filings including gambling winnings. Voluntary disclosure of personal finances by a governor modeled transparency that can bolster public trust in elected officials. (16 Oct 2025)

21. Nobel Committee awarded the Peace Prize to María Corina Machado for pro-democracy work in Venezuela. Honoring a Venezuelan opposition leader highlighted international support for democratic movements challenging authoritarian regimes. (11 Oct 2025)

22. organizers of "No Kings" protests and allied groups planned nationwide rallies against perceived authoritarianism and gerrymandering. The coordinated protests represented large-scale civil mobilization to defend democratic norms and fair representation. (14 Oct 2025; 15 Oct 2025; 16 Oct 2025; 17 Oct 2025)

23. Texas Governor Greg Abbott and California officials ordered evacuations and emergency responses to severe storms and wildfires. Evacuation orders and emergency mobilization illustrated state responsibilities to protect residents from climate-intensified disasters. (14 Oct 2025)

24. South Carolina health authorities quarantined unvaccinated students amid disease concerns. The quarantine underscored tensions between individual choice and collective health protections in managing vaccine-preventable outbreaks. (12 Oct 2025)

25. Texas resident Joshua Wayne Cole and federal prosecutors resolved a case in which Cole agreed to plead guilty to threatening an LGBTQ+ Pride event. The prosecution of violent threats against an LGBTQ+ parade demonstrated enforcement against hate-motivated intimidation of marginalized communities. (11 Oct 2025)

26. Governor Phil Scott of Vermont publicly opposed federalized National Guard deployments to U.S. cities. The Republican governor's stance defended constitutional limits on using military forces against civilians absent insurrection. (11 Oct 2025)

27. federal courts lifted travel restrictions for Palestinian activist Mahmoud Khalil while he contests deportation. Allowing domestic travel for advocacy recognized First Amendment interests even as removal proceedings continued. (17 Oct 2025)

28. Illinois village of Broadview and a federal judge secured an order to remove an illegal fence blocking access to an ICE facility. Removing the

barrier restored public access and visibility around a detention center, supporting community oversight and protest rights. (11 Oct 2025)

29. Alaska Health Department's Project Hope and partners organized a naloxone kit build to address overdose deaths. The community event expanded access to overdose-reversal drugs, strengthening grassroots capacity to respond to the opioid crisis. (17 Oct 2025)

## Economic Structure

1. The Trump Administration imposed a \$100,000 fee on H-1B visa applications. The steep fee threatened to limit access to skilled foreign labor to wealthier firms and applicants, reshaping labor markets and immigration by price. (11 Oct 2025; 16 Oct 2025)

2. The Trump Administration planned to cut annual refugee admissions from 125,000 to 7,500 with preferences for white South Africans. Drastically reducing refugee slots and favoring a specific white group embedded racial and ideological criteria into humanitarian admissions. (11 Oct 2025)

3. The Trump Administration froze or canceled over \$27 billion in federal funds, mostly in Democratic-led districts. Partisan targeting of federal spending during a shutdown weaponized economic resources against disfavored regions and projects. (14 Oct 2025; 17 Oct 2025)

4. The Trump Administration canceled funding for the Gateway Tunnel infrastructure project. Halting a critical transit tunnel jeopardized long-term economic growth and signaled that infrastructure commitments can be reversed for political leverage. (15 Oct 2025; 16 Oct 2025)

5. The Trump Administration cut a flood-protection grant for the Alaska Native village of Kipnuk before a devastating storm. Defunding climate resilience in a poor Indigenous community shifted disaster risk onto vulnerable residents while preserving federal savings. (15 Oct 2025; 16 Oct 2025)

6. Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent and President Trump approved and then doubled a bailout for Argentina widely seen as aiding a hedge fund ally. The bailout, acknowledged as offering little U.S. benefit, exemplified public risk-taking to protect private investors close to power. (15 Oct 2025)

7. U.S. Chamber of Commerce sued to block the new H-1B visa fee. Business litigation against the fee highlighted economic concerns that restrictive immigration pricing could harm competitiveness and labor supply. (16 Oct 2025)

8. The Trump Administration cut National Weather Service funding, reducing critical weather data. Budget cuts that impaired storm forecasting

weakened public safety infrastructure, especially for remote communities facing extreme weather. (14 Oct 2025)

9. Drug Enforcement Administration temporarily placed seven benzimidazole-opioids into Schedule I. Emergency scheduling of potent synthetic opioids aimed to curb abuse and overdose deaths, tightening regulatory control over emerging drugs. (15 Oct 2025)

10. Environmental Protection Agency canceled certain pesticide registrations for non-payment of maintenance fees. The cancellations adjusted the pesticide market and could modestly reduce environmental and health risks from some products. (15 Oct 2025)

11. Food and Drug Administration issued guidance allowing dual labeling for certain New World screwworm animal drugs. The guidance streamlined regulatory pathways for animal drugs addressing an emerging pest, supporting agricultural resilience and food security. (16 Oct 2025)

12. The Trump Administration planned IRS leadership changes to facilitate criminal inquiries into left-leaning groups. Restructuring IRS enforcement to target ideological opponents risked turning tax powers into a partisan economic weapon. (15 Oct 2025)

13. DEA and Chicago public health authorities responded to nitazene threats through scheduling and local alerts. Coordinated regulatory and public-health actions against synthetic opioids sought to mitigate overdose risks in local drug markets. (15 Oct 2025; 17 Oct 2025)

14. Nobel Prize Committee in Economic Sciences awarded the prize to economists studying innovation and growth. Recognizing work on innovation and competition may influence policy debates on how to structure markets and support long-term growth. (14 Oct 2025)

15. The Trump Administration cut a flood-protection grant and later oversaw National Guard disaster response in Alaska. The sequence of defunding protection then relying on emergency response illustrated a reactive approach that shifts climate risk costs onto affected communities. (15 Oct 2025; 16 Oct 2025; 17 Oct 2025)

16. National Nuclear Security Administration furloughed about 80% of its workforce due to the shutdown. Mass furloughs at the nuclear security agency risked delays in critical safety and weapons work, showing how fiscal standoffs can endanger core public goods. (17 Oct 2025)

17. European Union required Chinese investors to transfer technology to European firms. The policy mirrored China's own practices, reshaping global investment rules and competition over strategic technologies. (16 Oct 2025)

18. Dutch government nationalized Chinese-owned semiconductor firm Nexperia. Taking control of a Chinese-owned chipmaker under security law

reflected growing state intervention to protect critical economic infrastructure. (16 Oct 2025)

## Information, Memory, and Manipulation

1. Pentagon under Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth imposed restrictive media rules requiring authorization for reporting and limiting access. The new rules threatened expulsion for unapproved reporting, prompting major outlets to surrender badges and sharply reducing independent coverage of military affairs. (13 Oct 2025; 14 Oct 2025; 15 Oct 2025; 16 Oct 2025)

2. Indiana University administration ordered the student newspaper to cease print publication and fired its media adviser. Shutting down print operations and removing an adviser who resisted raised fears of administrative retaliation and censorship of student journalism. (16 Oct 2025)

3. major media outlets refused to sign Pentagon coverage agreements they viewed as unconstitutional. By rejecting restrictive rules, news organizations defended press freedom but lost embedded access, narrowing direct scrutiny of defense operations. (12 Oct 2025; 14 Oct 2025; 15 Oct 2025)

4. airports and transit authorities refused to air Kristi Noem's partisan shutdown video and PSA blaming Democrats. Declining to broadcast overtly partisan messages in public facilities upheld Hatch Act norms and limited use of state spaces for propaganda. (12 Oct 2025; 14 Oct 2025; 15 Oct 2025)

5. MAGA-aligned media outlets branded upcoming "No Kings" protests as pro-Antifa hate-America rallies. Framing pro-democracy demonstrations as extremist delegitimized peaceful dissent and primed audiences to view protesters as enemies. (14 Oct 2025; 16 Oct 2025)

6. Meta and U.S. Justice Department removed a Facebook group accused of targeting ICE agents after a government request. Platform compliance with a DOJ request to take down a group highlighted state influence over online speech under the banner of safety. (14 Oct 2025)

7. Department of Homeland Security alleged a coordinated campaign by narcoterrorists and domestic extremists against immigration officers. The narrative of joint foreign and domestic plots supported a securitized framing that can justify expanded surveillance and crackdowns. (15 Oct 2025)

8. White House and Homeland Security Secretary Kristi Noem produced partisan videos blaming Democrats for the shutdown using government resources. Using official communications channels for partisan blame blurred governance with campaigning and spread one-sided narratives about the crisis. (11 Oct 2025; 14 Oct 2025; 15 Oct 2025)

9. President Trump refiled a massive defamation lawsuit against the New

York Times and attacked the paper publicly. The renewed suit sought enormous damages from a leading newspaper, reinforcing a pattern of using litigation to intimidate critical media. (16 Oct 2025; 17 Oct 2025)

10. President Trump and allies pursued indictments of Letitia James and James Comey and investigations of Soros-linked groups. Targeting prominent critics and funders through criminal processes blurred law enforcement with political retribution and chilled opposition. (11 Oct 2025; 16 Oct 2025)

11. Young Republican leaders and Vice President JD Vance were implicated in racist group chats that party leaders downplayed. Leaked racist messages from politically connected youth leaders, and official minimization, exposed normalization of extremist rhetoric within parts of the political ecosystem. (15 Oct 2025)

12. The Trump Administration used Columbus Day proclamations and monuments to promote a heroic narrative of conquest. State-backed glorification of Columbus and related monuments advanced a selective historical memory that sidelines Indigenous perspectives and past injustices. (11 Oct 2025; 13 Oct 2025; 14 Oct 2025; 16 Oct 2025)

13. The Trump Administration and Congress moved to sell the Wilbur J. Cohen building, displacing Social Security murals. Selling the building that housed murals celebrating social protection physically removed a prominent reminder of government's role in economic security. (14 Oct 2025)

14. The Trump Administration pressured universities with funding offers tied to ideological conditions on DEI and international students. The proposed compact sought to reshape academic discourse and campus policies by leveraging federal money, threatening independent scholarship. (15 Oct 2025; 16 Oct 2025)

15. Citizens for Responsibility and Ethics in Washington challenged DHS and the National Archives over missing text-message records. The suit highlighted risks that key decision-making communications are being lost or destroyed, undermining historical accountability. (15 Oct 2025)

16. The Trump Administration used shutdown-related messaging and partisan PSAs to blame Democrats for all disruptions. Coordinated narratives across official and allied channels framed one party as solely responsible for the shutdown, shaping public perception of institutional failure. (11 Oct 2025; 14 Oct 2025; 15 Oct 2025; 17 Oct 2025)

17. National Security Council and President Trump issued NSPM-7 redefining certain beliefs as indicators of violence for federal monitoring. By tying ideological positions to presumptive violence, the directive expanded justification for surveillance and disruption of lawful political and religious expression. (16 Oct 2025)

18. media outlets and Pentagon press corps staged a walkout from the Pentagon over new reporting rules. Journalists' collective exit protested constraints on coverage but also left the defense establishment with fewer independent observers inside. (15 Oct 2025; 16 Oct 2025)

19. Indiana University and student journalists clashed over the future of the Indiana Daily Student's print edition and media independence. The dispute raised broader questions about administrative control over campus media and the robustness of student press freedoms. (16 Oct 2025)

20. Alvin Bragg and Prosecutors Against Gun Violence used coordinated messaging to address gun violence nationally. The appointment of a high-profile DA to co-chair a national prosecutors' group signaled organized prosecutorial advocacy on firearm policy. (17 Oct 2025)



## CHAPTER 14

### **WEEK 40 (18 OCT 2025 – 24 OCT 2025): BALLROOM AS BLUEPRINT**

*A demolished East Wing, weaponized clemency, and engineered representation show how personal rule advances without a single formal break in the system.*

This week was marked by serious authoritarian actions, as the presidency openly crossed legal, structural, and symbolic boundaries while also weaponizing justice and immigration systems. The removal of the White House East Wing to build a privately funded ballroom, done without proper plans or approvals and kept secret through information control, clearly undermines executive oversight, public memory, and transparency. Simultaneous pardons for George Santos, Changpeng Zhao, and Trump's \$230 million DOJ payout scheme further suggest that law is used as a weapon and that insider financial crimes are effectively overlooked. Militarized immigration raids, abusive ICE practices, and Venezuelans deported to El Salvador's mega-prison highlight security forces prioritizing regime narratives over human rights. The manipulation of representation persisted with North Carolina's gerrymandering and the refusal to seat Adelita Grijalva. Meanwhile, the Pentagon's new far-right press and AI-driven propaganda normalize control over information and spread disinformation. Mass protests like "No Kings" and efforts for state accountability provide some pushback, but they do not prevent the week's deepening grip on crony capitalism and personalist rule.

## Power and Authority

1. President Trump commuted former congressman George Santos's federal fraud sentence after only a few months served. By sharply reducing George Santos's punishment for serious financial crimes, the president used clemency to favor a political ally, weakening deterrence and public confidence that powerful officials are held to the same legal standards as others. (18 Oct 2025; 19 Oct 2025; 24 Oct 2025)

2. President Trump pardoned Binance founder Changpeng Zhao for sanctions and money-laundering offenses. The pardon for a wealthy crypto executive with business ties to the president signaled that financial and sanctions violations by well-connected actors can be erased by personal favor, undermining equal application of the law. (22 Oct 2025; 23 Oct 2025; 24 Oct 2025)

3. President Trump demanded \$230 million in compensation from the Department of Justice for past investigations into him. Seeking a massive taxpayer-funded payout over lawful investigations, to be decided by his own appointees, blurred the line between public office and private enrichment and pressured justice officials to reward the president personally. (21 Oct 2025; 22 Oct 2025; 23 Oct 2025)

4. President Trump ordered demolition of the White House East Wing to build a privately funded ballroom without required approvals. Razing a historic wing of the White House without completing mandated planning and review processes showed the presidency overriding legal and preservation constraints to reshape a national symbol for personal and donor benefit. (19 Oct 2025; 20 Oct 2025; 21 Oct 2025; 22 Oct 2025; 23 Oct 2025; 24 Oct 2025)

5. President Trump assembled an interagency task force to purge perceived "Deep State" opponents from the federal government. Creating a cross-agency purge task force targeted at supposed internal enemies threatened the neutrality of the civil service and encouraged loyalty-based enforcement over professional, nonpartisan administration. (20 Oct 2025)

6. President Trump publicly claimed he could invoke the Insurrection Act and deploy troops domestically to address unrest. Openly touting the Insurrection Act as a ready tool for domestic deployment of troops normalized using military force in civilian governance, pressuring other institutions to accept expanded emergency powers. (19 Oct 2025)

7. President Trump announced plans and then reversed a National Guard deployment to San Francisco based on personal appeals. Floating and then canceling a Guard deployment to a specific city at the urging of personal contacts highlighted how coercive federal power over localities can be

wielded or withheld for political reasons rather than clear security criteria. (19 Oct 2025; 23 Oct 2025; 24 Oct 2025)

8. President Trump threatened Harvard University with a \$500 million fine after claiming a tentative deal. Threatening an enormous fine against a major university as part of a broader campaign against disfavored campuses used federal economic power to intimidate academic institutions and chill independent governance. (19 Oct 2025)

9. President Trump warned that the 2020 election outcome must never be repeated and suggested ongoing efforts to prevent it. Framing the certified 2020 election as an unacceptable outcome that must be prevented again reinforced a narrative that justifies future restrictions on voting and election administration in the name of avoiding supposed past abuses. (21 Oct 2025)

10. Steve Bannon asserted that President Trump would run for and win an unconstitutional third term. A close ally's public claim that Trump will seek a third term, with talk of plans to bypass the 22nd Amendment, signaled intent to challenge constitutional term limits and normalize discussion of extended personal rule. (23 Oct 2025)

11. President Trump used Department of Justice funds to pay himself a \$230 million settlement over prior investigations. Directing Justice Department money to satisfy his own compensation claims converted prosecutorial resources into a personal revenue stream, eroding the boundary between state finances and the president's private interests. (23 Oct 2025)

## Institutions and Governance

1. Speaker Mike Johnson kept the House adjourned and refused to seat Representative-elect Adelita Grijalva during the shutdown. By holding the House in recess and blocking a duly elected member from taking her seat, House leadership used procedural control to limit representation and stall oversight efforts such as the Epstein files discharge petition. (19 Oct 2025; 20 Oct 2025; 21 Oct 2025; 22 Oct 2025; 23 Oct 2025)

2. Arizona Attorney General Kris Mayes and the State of Arizona sued the U.S. House and Speaker Mike Johnson to compel Adelita Grijalva's swearing-in. Arizona's lawsuit sought judicial enforcement of constitutional representation guarantees after House leaders blocked a certified winner, illustrating states turning to courts to defend their constituents' voice in Congress. (21 Oct 2025; 22 Oct 2025)

3. U.S. Senate repeatedly failed to pass funding measures, prolonging the longest full federal government shutdown. The Senate's inability to approve a funding resolution, amid House recess and partisan demands over healthcare

subsidies, left agencies unfunded and workers furloughed, showing Congress using shutdown brinkmanship instead of normal budgeting. (18 Oct 2025; 20 Oct 2025; 21 Oct 2025; 22 Oct 2025)

4. U.S. Supreme Court lifted injunctions that had blocked the Trump administration's large-scale federal workforce reductions. By allowing mass layoffs of federal employees to proceed, the Court enabled executive efforts to reshape the civil service, weakening job protections that support a professional, politically neutral bureaucracy. (19 Oct 2025)

5. Federal district and appeals courts blocked or scrutinized Trump administration efforts to deploy National Guard troops to Chicago and Portland. Judges in multiple jurisdictions questioned or halted domestic troop deployments, underscoring the judiciary's role in checking militarized responses to civil unrest and defending limits on executive emergency powers. (18 Oct 2025; 20 Oct 2025; 21 Oct 2025)

6. Federal courts and litigants handled multiple challenges to Trump administration immigration and deportation practices, including Mahmoud Khalil's case. Appeals and district courts reviewed claims of vindictive or unconstitutional immigration enforcement, showing both the politicization of deportation policy and the judiciary's importance in safeguarding due process for targeted individuals. (21 Oct 2025)

7. U.S. Court of Appeals for Veterans Claims rejected the administration's request to pause nearly all veterans' disability cases during the shutdown. Refusing to halt veterans' appeals despite the shutdown protected timely access to benefits adjudication and signaled judicial resistance to using fiscal crises to delay obligations to vulnerable claimants. (23 Oct 2025)

8. House Democrats accused President Trump of orchestrating an illegal scheme to obtain \$230 million from DOJ and Treasury. By formally challenging a confidential process that could direct hundreds of millions in public funds to the president, lawmakers attempted to assert congressional oversight over potential self-dealing within the executive branch. (23 Oct 2025)

9. Business coalitions and the U.S. Chamber of Commerce filed lawsuits challenging Trump administration tariffs and a new \$100,000 H-1B visa fee. Industry groups turned to the courts to contest sweeping tariffs and visa fees they called unlawful and economically harmful, illustrating how trade and immigration policy disputes are being fought through litigation as well as politics. (21 Oct 2025)

10. Federal courts and prosecutors oversaw politically charged cases involving James Comey, Letitia James, and leaks by U.S. attorney Lindsey Halligan. Motions, indictments, and revelations about leaks in high-profile

cases showed how prosecutorial decisions and misconduct allegations are entangled with partisan conflict, testing norms of impartial justice. (19 Oct 2025; 20 Oct 2025; 24 Oct 2025)

11. U.S. Senate and White House withdrew Paul Ingrassia's nomination to lead the Office of Special Counsel after racist texts surfaced. Senate resistance to confirming a nominee who had praised Nazism and disparaged civil rights holidays showed that, despite polarization, some bipartisan standards still constrain appointments to key oversight posts. (20 Oct 2025; 21 Oct 2025; 23 Oct 2025)

12. National Nuclear Security Administration and Department of Energy furloughed about 1,400 nuclear security employees during the government shutdown. Sending home staff responsible for maintaining the nuclear arsenal due to budget deadlock highlighted how partisan standoffs can disrupt core national security functions and weaken institutional resilience. (20 Oct 2025)

13. House Oversight Committee members demanded release of the Jeffrey Epstein files from the Justice Department. Lawmakers' push to obtain Epstein-related records reflected ongoing efforts to use congressional oversight to uncover potential elite wrongdoing, even as House leadership's procedural tactics delayed related votes. (22 Oct 2025)

14. Illinois Governor J.B. Pritzker created the Illinois Accountability Commission to document abuses by federal agents. Establishing a state-level body to record misconduct by federal officers aimed to build an evidentiary record and counter perceived federal impunity, reinforcing subnational checks on national enforcement power. (24 Oct 2025)

15. U.S. Census Bureau submitted its 2026 group-quarters census test plan for OMB review. Testing improved methods for counting people in group facilities ahead of the 2030 Census supported more accurate population data, which underpins fair representation and equitable distribution of public resources. (22 Oct 2025)

## Civil Rights and Dissent

1. The 50501 Movement and allied groups organized nationwide "No Kings" protests across all 50 states and abroad. Mass, largely peaceful demonstrations opposing perceived authoritarianism showed robust civic mobilization and use of assembly rights, even as some officials tried to delegitimize the protests as un-American or extremist. (18 Oct 2025; 19 Oct 2025; 20 Oct 2025)

2. House Republican leaders including Speaker Mike Johnson denounced the No Kings protests as un-American and linked them to domestic terror-

ism. Labeling large, peaceful demonstrations as unpatriotic or terror-adjacent reframed dissent as a security threat, potentially justifying harsher responses and discouraging participation in future protests. (19 Oct 2025)

3. Texas Governor Greg Abbott deployed the Texas National Guard ahead of No Kings Day protests. Sending Guard troops in anticipation of protests, despite events later remaining peaceful, contributed to the militarization of crowd control and signaled that large-scale dissent might be met with force. (19 Oct 2025)

4. ICE officers and federal agents used aggressive tactics and force in immigration enforcement, including against protesters and veterans. Reports of pepper-ball shootings, chemical exposure of journalists, injuries to veterans at protests, and violent traffic-stop raids showed immigration enforcement increasingly encroaching on civil liberties and protest rights. (20 Oct 2025; 21 Oct 2025; 22 Oct 2025; 23 Oct 2025)

5. Department of Homeland Security and ICE conducted a surprise raid in Manhattan's Chinatown without notifying local officials. A heavily armed raid that bypassed sanctuary-city coordination norms sowed fear in an immigrant neighborhood and strained federal-local relations, raising questions about respect for community safety and local policy choices. (21 Oct 2025; 22 Oct 2025)

6. Department of Homeland Security and allied agencies deported Venezuelan immigrants to El Salvador's mega-prison based on flawed gang allegations. Sending Venezuelans, including former informants, to a foreign high-security prison on unsubstantiated gang claims and despite court orders highlighted how immigration enforcement can disregard due process and stratify rights by origin. (19 Oct 2025; 21 Oct 2025; 23 Oct 2025)

7. The Trump Administration planned to overhaul refugee resettlement to cap admissions and favor white South Africans. A proposed refugee cap of 7,500 with preferences based on race, language, and ideology would embed discriminatory criteria into humanitarian policy, undermining equal treatment and international protection norms. (21 Oct 2025)

8. ICE and immigration detention operators subjected detainees, including pregnant women, to harsh conditions and medical neglect. Class actions and advocacy reports describing constant lighting, shackling, solitary confinement, and miscarriages in detention facilities documented systemic rights violations against immigrants held in U.S. custody. (20 Oct 2025; 23 Oct 2025)

9. Immigration agents detained more than 170 U.S. citizens in enforcement sweeps, sometimes using excessive force. Reports of citizens wrongly detained and abused during immigration operations showed how expansive

enforcement powers can erode basic protections even for those formally entitled to full constitutional rights. (20 Oct 2025)

10. Federal prosecutors and DOJ leadership pursued and defended controversial prosecutions of Letitia James and Kilmar Abrego Garcia. Cases widely viewed as retaliatory against political or immigration-related adversaries illustrated how prosecutorial discretion can be used to intimidate critics and activists, chilling dissent beyond the courtroom. (20 Oct 2025; 21 Oct 2025; 24 Oct 2025)

11. Senator Jeff Merkley held a Senate floor protest warning that Trump's actions threaten democracy. Using Senate floor time to frame the president's behavior as a grave democratic danger exemplified how elected officials can employ institutional platforms to defend norms and alert the public to perceived authoritarian drift. (22 Oct 2025)

12. 50501 Movement organizers convened a national strategy call to channel No Kings protest energy into ongoing organizing. Planning mutual aid, boycotts, and a future convergence in Washington aimed to convert one-day marches into sustained civic pressure, strengthening civil society's capacity to hold government accountable. (21 Oct 2025)

13. California Governor Gavin Newsom deployed the California National Guard and volunteers to support food banks during the shutdown. Using state military and volunteer resources for humanitarian relief rather than enforcement highlighted an alternative model of security focused on meeting basic needs when federal programs falter. (22 Oct 2025)

14. Civil rights and immigrant advocacy groups documented medical neglect and abuse of pregnant women in ICE detention and urged releases. Advocates' detailed accounts of miscarriages, shackling, and coerced procedures in detention facilities sought to force policy changes and accountability for treatment that violates basic human dignity. (23 Oct 2025)

15. Democratic U.S. senators urged the Education Department to help stop ICE raids near Chicago schools. Senators' appeal to treat schools as sensitive locations for immigration enforcement aimed to protect children's access to education and reduce fear in immigrant communities. (24 Oct 2025)

16. Public Religion Research Institute reported that a majority of Americans view Trump as a dangerous dictator whose power should be limited. Survey findings that most respondents see the president as a potential dictator reflected widespread public concern about authoritarian tendencies, which can shape civic engagement and resistance. (24 Oct 2025)

17. Young Republicans organizations and GOP officials faced resignations and chapter shutdowns after racist and violent group chats were exposed. The leak of racist, eliminationist rhetoric from youth party chats and subse-

quent institutional responses highlighted both the presence of extremist views in political networks and some capacity for internal sanction. (18 Oct 2025; 20 Oct 2025)

18. Sam O'Hara sued DC police and a National Guard member over his arrest for playing Darth Vader's theme in protest. A lawsuit alleging false arrest and battery for a musical protest against troop deployments tested how far authorities can go in restricting symbolic, nonviolent expression in public spaces. (23 Oct 2025)

## Economic Structure

1. President Trump imposed and maintained sweeping tariffs on Chinese and other foreign goods, driving up U.S. prices. High and escalating tariffs, including threats of 100% duties, fueled inflation and supply disruptions while being justified as "reciprocal," shifting economic burdens onto consumers and small businesses for geopolitical leverage. (18 Oct 2025; 19 Oct 2025; 23 Oct 2025)

2. The Trump Administration and Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent structured large bailout and swap arrangements to support Argentina's peso with U.S.-backed funds. Multi-billion-dollar facilities to stabilize Argentina's currency, reportedly benefiting a Trump-linked hedge fund and backed by U.S. guarantees, shifted financial risk to American taxpayers while serving favored investors' interests. (20 Oct 2025; 21 Oct 2025; 22 Oct 2025)

3. The Trump Administration expanded beef imports from Argentina despite domestic rancher opposition. Increasing Argentine beef imports while criticizing U.S. ranchers undercut domestic producers in favor of trade maneuvers, illustrating how agricultural policy can sacrifice local livelihoods to broader economic or political goals. (19 Oct 2025; 21 Oct 2025; 22 Oct 2025; 23 Oct 2025)

4. The Trump Administration approved a massive LNG export terminal and pressed the EU to weaken climate and human-rights rules. Greenlighting a large LNG hub and lobbying Europe to roll back climate due-diligence rules prioritized fossil-fuel exports and corporate interests over environmental protections and human-rights-based trade standards. (22 Oct 2025)

5. The Trump Administration canceled a major Nevada clean energy project and an EPA climate grant for an Alaskan village. Revoking support for large-scale renewable and resilience projects shifted federal investment away from climate adaptation and disadvantaged vulnerable communities, reinforcing fossil-heavy development patterns. (21 Oct 2025)

6. Department of Homeland Security purchased two Gulfstream jets for

senior officials during the government shutdown. Buying luxury aircraft for officials while ordinary federal workers went unpaid during a shutdown highlighted skewed spending priorities and deepened perceptions that public hardship coexists with elite comfort. (22 Oct 2025)

7. ICE leadership increased weapons spending by more than 600% compared with the prior year. A dramatic surge in weapons procurement for immigration enforcement redirected public funds toward militarized tools, reinforcing a security-first approach to migration over services or legal processing capacity. (20 Oct 2025)

8. North Carolina General Assembly failed to pass a state budget while federal Medicaid and SNAP cuts loomed. Leaving the state without a budget as federal safety-net reductions approached risked compounding harm to low-income residents, showing how legislative inaction can magnify national policy shocks for vulnerable groups. (20 Oct 2025)

9. Republican lawmakers in Congress refused to fund Affordable Care Act subsidies for millions during the shutdown. Blocking continued healthcare subsidies for about 20 million people used access to medical coverage as leverage in partisan conflict, threatening families' financial stability and health to gain policy concessions. (18 Oct 2025; 21 Oct 2025)

10. The Trump Administration and Congress enacted the One Big Beautiful Bill Act, cutting Medicaid and funding immigration crackdowns. A signature law that reduced Medicaid for poor and disabled people while financing aggressive immigration enforcement shifted federal priorities away from social protection toward punitive border and deportation measures. (23 Oct 2025)

11. The Trump Administration terminated trade negotiations with Canada over a tariff-themed advertisement dispute. Ending talks with a key ally in response to a political ad about tariffs showed how trade policy can be driven by personal grievance, injecting volatility into economic relations and supply chains. (23 Oct 2025; 24 Oct 2025)

12. National Cattlemen's Beef Association and Republican senators criticized Trump's beef import policy as harmful to U.S. ranchers and inconsistent with "America First". Industry and allied politicians' backlash to increased beef imports underscored tensions between protectionist rhetoric and trade decisions that expose domestic producers to foreign competition. (22 Oct 2025)

13. Nvidia, OpenAI, CoreWeave, AMD, Oracle, and xAI entered large, circular investment and purchasing deals in the AI sector. Massive cross-investments and purchase commitments among leading AI firms created tightly coupled financial loops, raising concerns that concentrated private

actors could amplify systemic risk in a strategically important industry. (22 Oct 2025)

14. The Trump Administration and Congress expanded ICE funding and hiring targets, creating incentives to lower recruitment standards. Budget measures that pushed ICE to rapidly add 10,000 officers, combined with evidence of unvetted recruits entering training, risked building a large enforcement workforce with weaker safeguards against abuse or corruption. (20 Oct 2025; 22 Oct 2025; 24 Oct 2025)

15. Pentagon and Unusual Machines awarded a major drone components contract to a company backed by Donald Trump Jr. Granting a large defense contract to a firm in which the president's son holds a significant stake blurred lines between procurement decisions and family financial interests, heightening concerns about cronyism in military spending. (23 Oct 2025)

## Information, Memory, and Manipulation

1. President Trump posted AI-generated videos depicting himself as a crowned fighter pilot attacking protesters and opponents. Using AI imagery to mock and demean protesters and political critics blurred satire with propaganda, normalizing dehumanizing portrayals of dissenters and exploiting new technology to shape public perception. (18 Oct 2025; 19 Oct 2025; 20 Oct 2025)

2. Treasury Department officials instructed employees not to share photos of the White House East Wing demolition. Telling staff to withhold images of a major alteration to a national landmark limited informal transparency about a controversial project, reinforcing executive control over how the public sees changes to civic space. (20 Oct 2025; 21 Oct 2025)

3. Federal Trade Commission under the Trump administration removed prior blog posts warning about AI-related harms from its website. Taking down earlier FTC analyses of AI risks reshaped the agency's public record on technology policy, reducing access to critical information that could inform debate and oversight of emerging systems. (20 Oct 2025)

4. Pentagon leadership replaced the traditional press pool with a new media corps dominated by far-right outlets under restrictive rules. Creating a Defense Department press corps composed largely of ideologically aligned outlets that accepted censorship terms marginalized independent reporters and concentrated control over military information in friendly hands. (22 Oct 2025; 23 Oct 2025)

5. White House press secretary Karoline Leavitt and Trump's legal team attacked critical journalists and pursued a multibillion-dollar defamation

suit against the Wall Street Journal. Personal attacks on reporters and an enormous defamation claim against a major newspaper signaled a strategy of intimidating watchdog media through both rhetoric and litigation. (20 Oct 2025)

6. Interim U.S. attorney Lindsey Halligan used auto-deleting encrypted messages with a reporter about an active criminal case. Communicating case details via auto-deleting chats risked violating federal records laws and obscured how prosecutorial decisions were made, undermining transparency in politically sensitive prosecutions. (20 Oct 2025; 23 Oct 2025)

7. Joe Rogan and other popular podcast hosts spread misinformation and conspiracy theories about vaccines, mental health, Pizzagate, and immigrants. Widely consumed podcasts that falsely linked vaccines to autism, antidepressants to school shootings, and immigrants to demographic threats contributed to a polluted information environment that distorts public understanding of policy issues. (21 Oct 2025)

8. Shawn Ryan and guests promoted baseless claims that Hollywood elites engage in child sacrifice for power. Amplifying extreme, unfounded allegations about cultural figures fed conspiratorial thinking that can delegitimize mainstream institutions and justify hostility toward perceived enemies. (21 Oct 2025)

9. European Broadcasting Union and BBC researchers found that major AI chatbots frequently produced inaccurate or poorly sourced news answers. Evidence that AI assistants often hallucinate or mis-source news responses underscored the risk that automated tools can unintentionally spread misinformation at scale if relied on for civic knowledge. (23 Oct 2025)

10. The Trump Administration and DOJ pressured universities like UVA and others over admissions and hiring, tying compliance to federal scrutiny. Agreements requiring universities to adjust diversity practices and regularly report data to DOJ in exchange for ending investigations and restoring funding showed federal leverage being used to reshape campus policies and discourse. (20 Oct 2025; 21 Oct 2025; 22 Oct 2025)

11. Kenny Loggins demanded removal of his song from Trump's AI video used without permission. An artist's objection to unauthorized use of his work in inflammatory political content highlighted how cultural products can be co-opted into propaganda without consent, complicating public understanding of endorsement. (19 Oct 2025)

12. Theo Von and podcast guests made racist analogies about the U.S. Postal Service and Black people. Racist jokes about public institutions and Black Americans on a popular show normalized derogatory stereotypes,

contributing to a media climate that undermines equal civic respect. (21 Oct 2025)

13. The Trump Administration and ballroom donors released a donor list for the privately funded White House ballroom project. Revealing that major tech, defense, and crypto firms were financing a presidential construction project at the White House raised concerns that symbolic public space was being reshaped by corporate patrons with regulatory interests. (24 Oct 2025)

14. Illinois Secretary of State Alexi Giannoulias launched the Plate Watch hotline to report law enforcement vehicles with altered plates. Encouraging the public to flag illegal plate tampering by federal agents sought to counter opaque enforcement practices and reinforce that even security agencies must follow basic identification laws. (23 Oct 2025)

## CHAPTER 15

### **WEEK 41 (25 OCT 2025 – 31 OCT 2025): SHUTDOWN AND BALLROOMS AS RULE**

*A fourth week of shutdown, militarized immigration, and donor-funded monuments showed power consolidating quietly as law, welfare, and truth bent around one man's needs.*

This was a severe week of authoritarian consolidation, with the Trump administration using the shutdown, immigration crackdown, and foreign policy to strengthen personalist control and monetize the state. Structurally, the greatest pressure targeted executive overreach, politicization of the civil service, crony capitalism, and stratified citizenship. The shutdown became a weapon: SNAP and CDC cuts, refusal to use contingency funds, and House inaction shifted risk and suffering onto the poor while protecting elite projects like the privately funded White House ballroom. Immigration and internal security policies were centralized around Stephen Miller, with ICE leadership purged, Border Patrol militarized in cities, secret detention sites expanded, and visas revoked for critics—significantly degrading the rule of law and equal citizenship. At the same time, pardons and contracts linked to Trump-associated crypto and donors entrenched a pay-to-play justice system. Yet courts and some members of Congress mounted notable resistance—blocking SNAP suspensions, voter ID requirements, and certain tariff powers—showing institutional defenses still active, even as the overall trend leaned heavily toward entrenched executive dominance and the normalization of emergency governance.

## Power and Authority

1. President Trump demolished and rapidly remodeled the White House East Wing to build a donor-funded ballroom. Trump's demolition and remodeling of the East Wing for a privately funded ballroom repurposed a core public asset for personal prestige, weakening norms that public property and planning bodies serve national rather than leader-centered interests. (25 Oct 2025; 26 Oct 2025)

2. President Trump terminated trade negotiations with Canada and imposed an additional 10% tariff on Canadian goods. By unilaterally ending talks and slapping retaliatory tariffs on Canada over a critical TV ad, Trump used trade powers as a personal political weapon, straining an alliance and bypassing deliberative economic policymaking. (25 Oct 2025; 27 Oct 2025)

3. President Trump left the United States for an Asia trip during an ongoing government shutdown. Trump's decision to travel abroad while a prolonged shutdown left 1.4 million federal workers unpaid signaled executive indifference to domestic governance crises and weakened accountability for resolving them. (25 Oct 2025)

4. President Trump refused to use emergency funds to sustain SNAP food assistance during the shutdown. The administration's refusal to tap available contingency funds for SNAP during a shutdown weaponized hunger against 42 million people, using executive control over safety nets as leverage in partisan conflict. (25 Oct 2025; 26 Oct 2025; 27 Oct 2025; 28 Oct 2025; 29 Oct 2025; 31 Oct 2025)

5. President Trump arranged a \$40 billion financial support package for Argentina tied to political conditions. Trump's Argentina bailout and swap line, conditioned on the ruling party's electoral performance, used U.S. financial power to shape another country's politics while domestic programs faced cuts, blurring foreign policy and partisan gain. (25 Oct 2025; 26 Oct 2025; 28 Oct 2025)

6. President Trump publicly criticized Canada over an anti-tariff ad and misrepresented Ronald Reagan's views. Trump's false claims about Reagan's tariff stance and attacks on a Canadian ad framed allied criticism as illegitimate, using presidential rhetoric to distort economic history and justify personalized trade retaliation. (25 Oct 2025)

7. President Trump oversaw a ceasefire agreement between Thailand and Cambodia linked to U.S. trade talks. By brokering a Thailand–Cambodia ceasefire while tying it to trade negotiations, Trump leveraged U.S. diplomatic clout to manage regional conflict in ways intertwined with his broader economic agenda. (26 Oct 2025)

8. President Trump publicly entertained the idea of serving a third presidential term despite constitutional limits. Trump's musings about a third term, even while acknowledging the 22nd Amendment, normalized discussion of circumventing term limits and signaled openness to testing constitutional constraints on executive tenure. (27 Oct 2025)

9. President Trump pardoned Binance founder Changpeng Zhao after his money-laundering conviction. Trump's pardon of Changpeng Zhao, whose firm later enabled trading in Trump-linked cryptocurrencies, suggested clemency could be bought, undermining equal enforcement of financial crime laws. (27 Oct 2025; 29 Oct 2025; 30 Oct 2025)

10. President Trump ordered the Pentagon to resume nuclear weapons testing after a 33-year pause. Trump's directive to restart nuclear testing unilaterally shifted U.S. nuclear posture, heightening global security risks and concentrating momentous war-and-peace decisions in the executive with little visible oversight. (29 Oct 2025; 30 Oct 2025)

11. President Trump drastically reduced U.S. refugee admissions and prioritized white South Africans. Cutting refugee admissions from 125,000 to 7,500 while favoring white South Africans reoriented humanitarian policy along racial and ideological lines, narrowing who can access U.S. protection. (29 Oct 2025; 31 Oct 2025)

12. President Trump called for abolishing the Senate filibuster to advance his agenda during the shutdown. Trump's push to scrap the filibuster during a funding standoff sought to strip minority protections from Senate procedure, centralizing legislative power around a bare majority aligned with the executive. (30 Oct 2025; 31 Oct 2025)

13. President Trump directed the Pentagon to deploy the USS Gerald R. Ford strike group for lethal Caribbean operations. Deploying a carrier group for lethal anti-narcotics strikes that killed dozens, with hints of moving operations ashore in Venezuela, expanded unilateral executive war-making with limited congressional debate. (25 Oct 2025; 27 Oct 2025; 28 Oct 2025; 30 Oct 2025; 31 Oct 2025)

14. President Trump used social media and official channels to falsely claim massive investment gains under his rule. Trump's fabricated claim of \$20 trillion in new investment used the presidency's megaphone to distort economic reality, weakening informed public judgment about his performance. (26 Oct 2025)

15. President Trump publicly admitted U.S. interference in Argentina's election for financial gain. Trump's boast that the U.S. profited from intervening in Argentina's election openly conflated American foreign policy with

regime financial interests, undermining norms against manipulating other democracies. (27 Oct 2025)

16. President Trump delivered a partisan speech to U.S. troops stationed in Japan. By turning an address to deployed troops into a partisan rally, Trump eroded the norm of an apolitical military, risking alignment of armed forces with a particular leader rather than the constitutional order. (27 Oct 2025)

17. President Trump used Truth Social to announce and justify nuclear testing and other major security shifts. Announcing nuclear testing and other security moves via personal social media bypassed traditional interbranch consultation and formal communication channels, concentrating agenda-setting in the president's direct media presence. (30 Oct 2025)

18. President Trump publicly attacked the 2020 election as rigged and threatened federal intervention in future voting. Trump's renewed claims that 2020 was stolen and threats of federal intervention, coupled with calls to end mail and early voting, further delegitimized elections and framed restrictive rules as necessary corrections. (25 Oct 2025; 26 Oct 2025)

19. President Trump demanded \$230 million from the Justice Department for alleged persecution by investigations. Trump's attempt to extract \$230 million from DOJ over lawful investigations inverted accountability, using executive influence to seek personal compensation from the very institution meant to check presidential misconduct. (27 Oct 2025; 29 Oct 2025)

20. President Trump ordered the National Guard nationwide to form riot-control quick reaction forces. Mandating quick reaction National Guard units in every state for riot control embedded a standing domestic force under federal influence, expanding tools for rapid military-style responses to civil unrest. (29 Oct 2025)

21. President Trump used the government shutdown to justify mass layoffs at the CDC. Trump's shutdown-driven CDC layoffs, including entire ethics and review offices, hollowed out a key public health institution under cover of budget crisis, weakening expert capacity for future emergencies. (31 Oct 2025)

22. President Trump restructured State Department migration bureaus to advance hardline remigration policies. Creating an "office of remigration" and installing ideological loyalists over refugee and consular functions repurposed diplomatic machinery toward expulsion and exclusion, sidelining career expertise. (31 Oct 2025)

23. President Trump oversaw revocation of thousands of visas and bans on immigrants from 19 countries. Mass visa revocations, country bans, and harsh deportations, with preference for white South Africans, recast legal migration

as a privilege for favored groups, reshaping who can belong or study in the U.S. (31 Oct 2025)

24. President Trump used the Justice Department to revisit 2020 election records in Fulton County, Georgia. DOJ's renewed demand for 2020 Fulton County records, despite prior clearances, extended Trump's narrative of a tainted election and signaled willingness to deploy federal civil-rights tools for partisan re-litigation. (31 Oct 2025)

## **Institutions and Governance**

1. U.S. Congress and the Trump administration allowed a prolonged government shutdown to continue into its fourth week. The extended shutdown, driven by partisan deadlock over healthcare and SNAP, crippled federal operations and showed how budget brinkmanship can be used to disable core state functions and bargaining power of workers. (25 Oct 2025; 26 Oct 2025; 28 Oct 2025; 29 Oct 2025; 31 Oct 2025)

2. Speaker Mike Johnson and House Republican leadership kept the House adjourned for most days during the shutdown, cancelling scheduled business. By repeatedly adjourning the House during a major shutdown, Johnson effectively sidelined the chamber from resolving funding and oversight disputes, weakening legislative responsiveness and scrutiny. (25 Oct 2025; 26 Oct 2025)

3. Congressional Democrats refused to pass government funding without extending ACA premium tax credits. Democrats' insistence on pairing government funding with ACA subsidy extensions tied fiscal negotiations to healthcare access, using legislative leverage to protect coverage for millions. (25 Oct 2025)

4. Commonwealth Fund reported that expiring ACA premium tax credits could cost nearly 5 million people their insurance. The projection that millions could lose coverage if subsidies lapse underscored how congressional inaction on routine renewals can destabilize health security and strain democratic legitimacy. (25 Oct 2025)

5. Federal courts in Oregon and the Ninth Circuit blocked and agreed to rehear Trump's attempts to deploy federalized National Guard in Portland. Judicial orders limiting Trump's authority to federalize and deploy Guard troops to Portland reaffirmed checks on executive use of military force in domestic protest policing. (25 Oct 2025; 29 Oct 2025)

6. Students for Fair Admissions filed a lawsuit challenging Kamehameha Schools' Native Hawaiian-focused admissions policy. The suit against Kamehameha Schools tested how far post-affirmative action jurisprudence will

constrain race-conscious efforts to remedy historical dispossession of Native Hawaiians. (26 Oct 2025)

7. Rev. William Barber and Repairers of the Breach announced a lawsuit against North Carolina's new redistricting maps. Barber's planned challenge to North Carolina's maps sought to use courts to counter partisan and racial gerrymanders that entrench one party's power despite voter preferences. (26 Oct 2025)

8. Indiana Governor Mike Braun called a special legislative session to redraw congressional districts mid-decade. Braun's push for mid-decade redistricting under Trump's pressure used state legislative power to lock in partisan advantage, undermining stable and neutral representation rules. (27 Oct 2025)

9. New York voters and Elias Law Group filed a lawsuit alleging racial vote dilution in New York's 11th congressional district map. The challenge to Staten Island's map argued that Black and Latino voters' power was unlawfully diluted, highlighting ongoing reliance on courts to enforce voting-rights protections against partisan cartography. (27 Oct 2025)

10. Department of Justice under President Trump brought felony charges against James Comey and indicted New York AG Letitia James. Charging two prominent Trump critics signaled a justice system increasingly used to punish perceived enemies, chilling independent oversight and opposition officeholders. (27 Oct 2025)

11. The Trump Administration filed an emergency Supreme Court appeal to uphold firing of Library of Congress copyright chief. The emergency appeal over Shira Perlmutter's dismissal showed the administration's willingness to push high courts to validate politicized personnel decisions in key knowledge institutions. (27 Oct 2025)

12. U.S. Senate passed bipartisan bills to block Trump's tariffs on Brazil and global imports. Senate votes to nullify emergency-based tariffs asserted legislative authority over trade, signaling rare bipartisan resistance to executive economic overreach even if the House blocked final action. (29 Oct 2025; 30 Oct 2025)

13. Senator Mark Warner and Senate Democrats protested exclusion of Democrats from briefings on U.S. military strikes. Excluding Democrats from strike briefings undermined Congress's collective war-powers role, prompting warnings that the administration was treating oversight as a partisan privilege. (29 Oct 2025)

14. Coalitions of over two dozen states, cities, and advocates sued the Trump administration to stop suspension of SNAP benefits during the shutdown. Multi-state lawsuits over SNAP suspension used the courts to force

continuation of food aid, testing whether legal remedies can still compel an unwilling executive to honor statutory safety-net obligations. (28 Oct 2025; 29 Oct 2025)

15. Federal judges in Rhode Island and Massachusetts blocked the Trump administration from suspending SNAP and ordered emergency funding. Court orders compelling USDA to release contingency funds and continue SNAP showed the judiciary acting as a last-resort check to preserve basic welfare during executive-manufactured crises. (30 Oct 2025; 31 Oct 2025)

16. Federal appeals courts limited judicial oversight of immigration raids by blocking daily reporting orders. The Seventh Circuit's stay of a judge's daily-briefing order on Chicago raids curtailed one avenue of real-time oversight over aggressive federal enforcement tactics. (30 Oct 2025)

17. Federal courts in Louisiana bankruptcy proceedings approved a \$230 million settlement for New Orleans clergy sexual abuse victims. The archdiocese settlement, including commitments to release files on abusive priests, used bankruptcy courts to deliver partial justice and transparency in a long-running institutional abuse scandal. (30 Oct 2025)

18. American Federation of Government Employees and federal courts challenged CDC layoffs as illegal and won partial reinstatement of staff. Union litigation that reversed some CDC terminations highlighted courts' role in policing reduction-in-force abuses that can quietly dismantle critical public health capacity. (31 Oct 2025)

19. Senate Democrats led by Adam Schiff demanded full disclosure of donors funding Trump's White House ballroom project. Senators' request for a detailed donor list sought to expose potential pay-to-play dynamics in privately financing a presidential construction project on federal property. (29 Oct 2025)

20. Seven U.S. senators sent a letter questioning Trump's pardon of Changpeng Zhao. Senators' inquiry into the CZ pardon pressed DOJ for answers on whether financial ties to the president influenced clemency, asserting a legislative check on potentially corrupt use of pardon power. (30 Oct 2025)

21. New York Attorney General Letitia James launched a public portal for reporting illegal or unconstitutional federal actions. James's portal created a state-level channel for documenting federal abuses, bolstering decentralized oversight when national institutions are perceived as compromised. (26 Oct 2025)

22. Commission of Fine Arts and President Trump saw all six commission members fired and replaced with Trump-aligned appointees. Trump's mass firing of the Fine Arts Commission to advance projects like the "Arc de

Trump” replaced independent design oversight with loyalists, politicizing stewardship of federal civic space. (29 Oct 2025)

23. Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pensions Committee postponed the hearing for Trump’s surgeon general nominee Casey Means. The delayed hearing for a controversial surgeon general pick kept a key public health role in limbo, illustrating how appointments battles can stall leadership in critical agencies. (30 Oct 2025)

24. U.S. Senate rejected a resolution to halt Fish and Wildlife’s barred owl cull plan. By declining to block a large-scale barred owl cull, the Senate deferred to agency wildlife management decisions, balancing ecological goals against ethical objections without direct legislative override. (31 Oct 2025)

25. Senator Elizabeth Warren and Democratic colleagues sent a letter criticizing Trump’s energy policies for raising electricity costs. Democrats’ letter tying higher power bills to Trump’s fossil-fuel agenda used oversight tools to link executive policy choices with household economic strain and climate inaction. (31 Oct 2025)

26. Federal Communications Commission updated submarine cable licensing rules to address national security risks. The FCC’s new reporting and cybersecurity requirements for submarine cables aimed to shield critical communications infrastructure from foreign control while preserving regulatory oversight. (27 Oct 2025)

27. Environmental Protection Agency postponed a scientific advisory panel meeting due to the funding lapse. Delaying a FIFRA advisory panel on genetically engineered mosquitoes because of the shutdown showed how fiscal standoffs can stall expert review of emerging public health technologies. (27 Oct 2025)

28. Environmental Protection Agency advanced multiple information collection and regulatory actions on turbines, fuels, pesticides, and air emissions. EPA’s ongoing ICR renewals and tolerance exemptions reflected routine regulatory governance continuing amid political turmoil, maintaining environmental monitoring and safety standards. (28 Oct 2025; 29 Oct 2025; 30 Oct 2025; 31 Oct 2025)

29. U.S. Department of Agriculture removed online guidance stating SNAP contingency funds could be used during a shutdown. USDA’s quiet deletion of guidance about using contingency funds obscured legal options for sustaining SNAP, weakening transparency around how executive choices, not law, drove benefit cuts. (29 Oct 2025)

## Civil Rights and Dissent

1. U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement conducted aggressive raids that led to the death of Honduran immigrant José Castro Rivera. Rivera's death while fleeing an ICE operation underscored the lethal risks of intensified deportation campaigns and their chilling effect on immigrant communities' willingness to engage with authorities. (25 Oct 2025)
2. California ballot sponsors advanced Proposition 50 to suspend the state's independent redistricting commission. Prop 50's bid to sideline California's independent commission in favor of partisan map-drawing mirrored national gerrymandering battles, trading neutral processes for short-term seat gains. (25 Oct 2025)
3. U.S. Department of Justice announced plans to monitor polling sites in six jurisdictions for the November elections. DOJ's deployment of election monitors aimed to deter intimidation and ensure compliance with voting-rights laws in key jurisdictions. (25 Oct 2025)
4. American Civil Liberties Union sued over the detention of a DC protester who played "The Imperial March" at National Guard patrols. The ACLU's case on behalf of Sam O'Hara challenged the use of detention against a musical protest, testing protections for expressive dissent against militarized patrols. (25 Oct 2025)
5. ICE and Department of Homeland Security detained British journalist Sami Hamdi after his pro-Palestinian advocacy. Hamdi's detention and visa revocation, reportedly spurred by ideological opponents, blurred immigration enforcement with retaliation against foreign speech critical of U.S. allies. (26 Oct 2025; 30 Oct 2025)
6. U.S. Congress and North Carolina General Assembly pursued and resisted gerrymanders that skewed representation in North Carolina. North Carolina's GOP-led targeting of Democratic seats, and planned resistance campaigns, highlighted how map manipulation can entrench minority rule and spur civil mobilization. (26 Oct 2025; 31 Oct 2025)
7. American Federation of Government Employees called for a short-term spending measure to end the shutdown and protect federal workers. The largest federal workers' union's plea for a stopgap bill underscored how shutdowns erode labor security and push public servants into economic precarity. (26 Oct 2025)
8. Illinois Governor JB Pritzker urged federal agencies to suspend immigration raids over Halloween weekend. Pritzker's request to pause raids after tear gas was used at a children's parade highlighted state-level efforts to

shield residents from federal tactics seen as traumatizing and excessive. (30 Oct 2025)

9. Federal agents and Border Patrol used tear gas and militarized tactics against civilians during immigration operations in U.S. cities. Tear gas at a Chicago Halloween parade and helicopter-backed raids in multiple cities showed immigration enforcement bleeding into paramilitary-style crowd control, endangering bystanders and chilling protest. (25 Oct 2025; 28 Oct 2025)

10. U.S. Border Patrol and ICE leadership expanded street arrests and secretive detention practices in immigration enforcement. Masked agents detaining people off the streets and holding them in hidden rooms for days without oversight eroded due process and normalized opaque, fear-inducing enforcement. (28 Oct 2025; 30 Oct 2025)

11. Federal authorities indicted congressional candidate Kat Abughazaleh over her participation in ICE facility protests. Charging a progressive House candidate for protest-related conduct at an ICE site risked turning federal criminal law into a tool for sidelining dissenting political voices. (29 Oct 2025)

12. George Mason University administration demanded removal of a Students for Justice in Palestine video citing antisemitism rules. GMU's order to take down a pro-Palestinian video under the IHRA definition raised concerns that university policies can be used to suppress controversial political speech on campus. (29 Oct 2025)

13. Illinois advocates including ACLU of Illinois and MacArthur Justice Center sued over conditions and access restrictions at the Broadview ICE facility. The Broadview lawsuit alleged denial of attorney access, visits by officials, and coerced signatures, spotlighting how detention practices can strip immigrants of basic legal protections. (31 Oct 2025)

14. The Trump Administration and Stephen Miller centralized immigration policy through secret calls targeting critics and visa holders. Miller's daily off-the-books calls directing visa revocations and deportations of political critics fused immigration control with ideological policing, bypassing transparent policymaking. (31 Oct 2025)

15. The Trump Administration and ICE reassigned ICE leadership and elevated Border Patrol officials to drive deportation quotas. Replacing ICE field directors with Border Patrol hardliners to hit 3,000 arrests per day reoriented enforcement toward volume and intimidation rather than individualized justice. (27 Oct 2025; 28 Oct 2025; 31 Oct 2025)

16. ICE and private contractors planned to privatize deportation transport operations in Texas with armed contractors. Outsourcing detainee transport

to armed private firms risked weakening accountability for use of force and treatment of immigrants in custody. (30 Oct 2025)

17. Federal law enforcement and DOJ pursued prosecutions and gag orders affecting defendants' rights and oversight. A gag order in the Abrego Garcia case and omissions in shooting reports showed how prosecutorial and investigative choices can limit fair-trial rights and public scrutiny of force. (28 Oct 2025)

18. U.S. Department of Health and Human Services under Trump demanded removal of transgender content from federally funded sex education programs. Threatening to cut funds unless states erased references to gender identity from sex ed weaponized federal grants to marginalize LGBTQ+ students and constrain inclusive curricula. (28 Oct 2025)

19. Texas Attorney General Ken Paxton sued Tylenol makers over alleged autism and ADHD risks to pregnant people. Paxton's lawsuit, echoing unproven federal claims, risked politicizing consumer protection and public health messaging, potentially confusing patients and providers. (28 Oct 2025)

20. Organizers of "Black Out the System" announced a nationwide economic boycott to protest authoritarian governance. The planned boycott used collective purchasing power as a nonviolent tactic to protest perceived democratic backsliding, illustrating civil society's role in economic resistance. (31 Oct 2025)

21. U.S. federal courts blocked enforcement of a citizenship-proof requirement on federal voter registration forms. By halting a citizenship documentation mandate, a federal judge protected access to voter registration from an executive order likely to disenfranchise eligible voters. (30 Oct 2025)

22. U.S. Department of Justice civil rights division requested 2020 election records from Fulton County, Georgia, citing civil-rights statutes. Reopening scrutiny of Fulton County's 2020 election under civil-rights authorities risked repurposing protections meant to guard voters into tools for perpetuating fraud narratives. (31 Oct 2025)

## Economic Structure

1. California Governor Gavin Newsom signed a law allowing year-round hunting of non-native mute swans. California's authorization of year-round hunting of invasive mute swans reflected a policy choice to prioritize ecosystem protection and native species over animal-welfare concerns in managing public environmental goods. (25 Oct 2025)

2. California Governor Gavin Newsom allocated \$140 million to Planned Parenthood to offset federal funding cuts. State funding to keep Planned

Parenthood clinics open countered federal defunding efforts, preserving access to reproductive healthcare where national policy had withdrawn support. (25 Oct 2025)

3. The Trump Administration implemented tariffs and immigration policies that sharply hurt Iowa's manufacturing and agriculture. Tariffs and labor restrictions that cut Iowa's GDP and devastated soybean markets showed how national economic nationalism can impose heavy localized costs on workers and farmers. (25 Oct 2025)

4. Billionaire donor Timothy Mellon donated \$130 million to help pay U.S. troops during the shutdown. Mellon's short-lived funding of troop pay during a shutdown highlighted how private wealth can step into core state functions, raising concerns about donor leverage over military operations. (25 Oct 2025)

5. The Trump Administration arranged a \$40 billion bailout and swap line for Argentina while domestic programs faced cuts. Large-scale support for Argentina amid a U.S. shutdown and SNAP crisis illustrated priorities that favored foreign financial markets and bondholders over domestic social stability. (25 Oct 2025; 26 Oct 2025; 28 Oct 2025)

6. The Trump Administration negotiated trade frameworks and concessions with China and Brazil to ease tariff conflicts. Framework deals with China and talks with Brazil de-escalated looming tariff spikes and rare-earth restrictions, stabilizing global supply chains but sometimes restoring a status quo Trump had himself disrupted. (27 Oct 2025; 28 Oct 2025; 29 Oct 2025; 30 Oct 2025)

7. The Trump Administration imposed steep tariffs on chocolate imports from major cocoa-producing countries. New tariffs on cocoa-origin chocolate raised consumer prices and illustrated how trade policy choices can function as a regressive tax on households while signaling toughness abroad. (30 Oct 2025)

8. The Trump Administration and USDA withheld billions in SNAP contingency funds despite prior guidance allowing their use. USDA's decision not to deploy \$5–6 billion in SNAP reserves during a shutdown turned a technical funding tool into a political weapon, deepening food insecurity and local economic contraction. (26 Oct 2025; 28 Oct 2025; 29 Oct 2025; 31 Oct 2025)

9. The Trump Administration allowed the African Growth and Opportunity Act to expire and imposed tariffs on African countries. Letting AGOA lapse and adding tariffs on African exports reduced market access for some of the world's poorest countries, undermining development and potentially driving migration pressures. (31 Oct 2025)

10. Pentagon under the Trump administration awarded a major drone

contract to a company advised and owned by Donald Trump Jr. Granting a drone contract to Unusual Machines, where Trump Jr. holds shares and influences Pentagon hiring, blurred lines between defense procurement and family enrichment. (27 Oct 2025)

ii. Trump family and associated crypto ventures earned hundreds of millions from World Liberty tokens and related cryptocurrencies. The Trump family's \$864 million crypto windfall, including foreign-linked investors, created powerful financial incentives to shape regulation and policy in favor of their own digital assets. (27 Oct 2025)

12. Binance U.S. enabled trading of Trump-linked cryptocurrencies USDI and WLFI after CZ's pardon. Allowing trading of tokens that directly enrich Trump while he controls federal enforcement fused private markets with presidential self-interest, inviting regulatory capture. (30 Oct 2025)

13. Major corporations including Amazon, Microsoft, Google, and Comcast funded Trump's White House ballroom project despite prior democracy pledges. Corporate donations to a Trump-branded White House project, after vows to distance from anti-democratic actors, showed how business interests can override stated commitments to democratic norms. (28 Oct 2025)

14. The Trump Administration and ICE expanded militarized deportation operations projected to shrink GDP and labor supply. Analyses showing mass deportations could cut GDP by up to 7.4% highlighted how aggressive immigration enforcement can damage the broader economy and labor markets. (28 Oct 2025)

15. The Trump Administration allowed the shutdown to cause severe air traffic controller shortages and flight delays. Forcing controllers and TSA officers to work unpaid led to staffing crises and delays, demonstrating how fiscal standoffs can degrade critical infrastructure and public safety. (26 Oct 2025)

16. The Trump Administration managed the Kennedy Center with a revenue-first approach that hurt ticket sales. Plunging ticket sales under Trump's Kennedy Center leadership suggested that prioritizing short-term revenue and political branding over artistic mission can weaken major cultural institutions. (30 Oct 2025)

17. President Trump considered allowing NVIDIA to sell advanced AI chips to China. Weighing approval for exports of cutting-edge AI chips to China raised questions about trading long-term technological and security leverage for short-term commercial or diplomatic gains. (30 Oct 2025)

18. U.S. Congress and USDA allowed the shutdown to threaten SNAP benefits for 42 million Americans. The looming cutoff of SNAP during a protracted shutdown exposed how essential welfare programs can be held

hostage in partisan standoffs, destabilizing household food security nationwide. (26 Oct 2025; 31 Oct 2025)

19. Japanese government pursued structural economic reforms on energy, corporate culture, exports, software, FDI, and debt. Japan's efforts to cut electricity costs, reform corporate practices, boost exports, and attract greenfield FDI illustrated a democratic state using policy to enhance productivity and resilience. (29 Oct 2025)

20. Policy analysts and rich-country governments proposed opening markets and directing aid directly to citizens in the poorest big countries. Proposals to fully open rich-country markets and channel aid directly to people in Pakistan, Nigeria, DRC, Ethiopia, and Tanzania framed trade and assistance as tools to reduce poverty and instability. (31 Oct 2025)

## Information, Memory, and Manipulation

1. USDA Food and Nutrition Service posted a banner blaming a “Radical Left Democrat shutdown” for lack of updates. Using an official USDA site to cast the shutdown as solely Democrats’ fault turned a public information portal into partisan propaganda, eroding trust in neutral government communications. (25 Oct 2025; 31 Oct 2025)

2. Bill Owens and Paramount corporate leadership revealed corporate pressure on 60 Minutes to avoid controversial coverage of Gaza and Trump. Owens’s account of Paramount discouraging sensitive reporting showed how corporate interests can narrow mainstream investigative journalism on powerful actors and conflicts. (25 Oct 2025)

3. Trump-appointed media regulator allegedly threatened ABC, contributing to Jimmy Kimmel’s suspension. Regulatory pressure that helped sideline a critical late-night host illustrated how state power over licenses can be used to chill media satire and criticism. (25 Oct 2025)

4. Former President Joe Biden gave a speech warning about Trump’s overuse of executive power and shutdown tactics. Biden’s remarks framed Trump’s presidency as a departure from limited, checked executive power, contributing to public understanding of institutional stakes in current conflicts. (27 Oct 2025)

5. The Trump Administration and USDA removed online guidance explaining that SNAP contingency funds could be used during shutdowns. Deleting guidance that contradicted the administration’s narrative about legal limits on SNAP funding obscured the record and made it harder for the public to see that cuts were a choice, not a necessity. (29 Oct 2025)

6. The Trump Administration and Stephen Miller orchestrated a purge of

FBI agents who investigated Trump, according to a new book. Efforts to identify and remove agents tied to January 6 and Mar-a-Lago probes, and to expose their names, signaled retaliation against investigators and threatened future scrutiny of presidential wrongdoing. (30 Oct 2025)

7. The Times newspaper apologized for publishing a fake interview with Bill de Blasio based on misattributed quotes. The Times' retraction of a fabricated de Blasio interview highlighted vulnerabilities in verification processes that, if uncorrected, can mislead voters about political alliances and conflicts. (31 Oct 2025)

8. USDA website managers blamed trans people and "illegal aliens" for the government shutdown in official text. Using a federal website to scapegoat marginalized groups for a political funding impasse fused disinformation with state messaging, deepening stigmatization and confusion. (31 Oct 2025)

9. Donald Trump repeated false claims about the 2020 election and exaggerated economic achievements. Trump's continued assertions of a stolen 2020 election and invented investment figures kept disinformation central to his political brand, undermining shared factual baselines for democratic debate. (25 Oct 2025; 26 Oct 2025)

10. Social media platforms and global publics facilitated the spread of extremism and unrest that helped fuel authoritarian appeals. Analyses of social media's role in amplifying radical ideas and protests showed how digital architectures can destabilize democracies and create openings for strongman politics. (26 Oct 2025)

11. Russian President Vladimir Putin centralized power and repressed LGBTQ+ people, activists, and independent media. Putin's consolidation of authority and targeting of minorities and media illustrated a model of authoritarian control that shapes global expectations about acceptable limits on dissent and identity. (26 Oct 2025)

12. Global leaders inspired by Putin adopted centralized, institution-weakening governance styles. The emulation of Putin-like centralization by leaders such as Erdogan, Orban, and Netanyahu signaled a broader international trend toward personalist rule and weakened checks. (26 Oct 2025)

13. Google and Amazon in contracts with the Israeli government agreed to secretive terms and mechanisms affecting data access and jurisdiction. Revelations about opaque "winking mechanisms" in cloud contracts with Israel raised concerns that corporate platforms may quietly accommodate state demands that affect privacy and sovereignty. (29 Oct 2025)

14. The Times of London misattributed quotes to Bill de Blasio from a

different person with a similar name. The mistaken attribution of critical quotes to a former mayor underscored how identity confusion can distort political narratives and damage reputations if not promptly corrected. (31 Oct 2025)

15. The Trump Administration revoked the visa of Nigerian Nobel laureate Wole Soyinka, a prominent Trump critic. Stripping Soyinka's visa signaled that outspoken foreign intellectuals could face immigration penalties for criticism, narrowing the range of voices able to engage U.S. audiences. (28 Oct 2025)

16. Heather Cox Richardson and other commentators documented and contextualized Trump-era institutional changes and shutdown impacts. Detailed public analysis of shutdown dynamics, tariffs, and institutional shifts provided citizens with interpretive frameworks to understand complex democratic risks. (25 Oct 2025; 26 Oct 2025)

## CHAPTER 16

### **WEEK 42 (1 NOV 2025 – 7 NOV 2025): HUNGER AND PARDONS AS POWER**

*A week of shutdown brinkmanship, militarized enforcement, and pay-to-play clemency showed law, welfare, and knowledge bent to serve executive will.*

This week shows a sharp rise in authoritarian abuses by the executive branch, countered by a surprisingly strong, though still limited, democratic backlash. On the negative side, the Trump administration openly defies court orders on SNAP, expands war powers across multiple theaters, threatens domestic military deployment under the Insurrection Act, and issues broad pardons related to 2020 election subversion and other elite allies. Immigration enforcement intensifies into a nearly military, partly privatized system targeting immigrants and communities, while Congress approves a significant expansion of ICE detention facilities. Scandals involving regulation and patronage—from Extremity Care’s secret ballroom donation to Binance and the McMahon pardons—highlight crony capitalism and the transformation of public tragedy and shutdown hardship into influence and profit. At the same time, courts and voters mount meaningful resistance: judges mandate full funding for SNAP and push back against politicized prosecutions; Pennsylvania maintains a pro-democracy supreme court; Maine voters reject voter ID laws; Democrats secure key governorships and local offices; and California’s Prop 50, though also a partisan gerrymander, is seen as a response to earlier abuses. Overall, the trend leans heavily toward entrenched executive impunity, stratified citizenship, and weaponized law, but the electoral and judicial responses show that core democratic functions remain active.

## Power and Authority

1. Department of Justice told Congress the War Powers Resolution did not apply to ongoing boat bombings. DOJ's claim that lethal airstrikes on boats are not "hostilities" under the War Powers Resolution narrowed congressional war-oversight triggers and expanded unilateral executive authority over the use of force. (1 Nov 2025)

2. President Donald Trump urged Republicans to abolish the Senate filibuster during the shutdown. Trump's call to scrap the filibuster in order to speed his agenda and end the shutdown sought to reshape Senate rules in ways that could entrench one-party control over national policy. (1 Nov 2025)

3. President Donald Trump threatened military action against Nigeria over violence against Christians. Trump's threat to invade Nigeria, framed in religious terms, signaled willingness to project U.S. military power unilaterally, raising concerns about unchecked executive war-making and politicized use of force abroad. (1 Nov 2025)

4. Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth ordered all Pentagon contacts with Congress routed through legislative affairs. Centralizing military communications with Congress under a political gatekeeper reduced direct information flow to lawmakers and weakened independent oversight of defense policy and operations. (1 Nov 2025)

5. President Donald Trump said he would consider using the Insurrection Act for domestic military deployments. Trump's assertion that he could deploy troops domestically under the Insurrection Act without judicial review normalized using military force against civil unrest and downplayed legal checks on such deployments. (2 Nov 2025)

6. President Donald Trump ordered demolition of the White House East Wing to build a ballroom. Replacing the East Wing, long used for First Lady initiatives and public engagement, with a \$300m ballroom redirected symbolic public space toward presidential spectacle rather than institutional function. (3 Nov 2025)

7. President Donald Trump froze \$100 million in federal funds for tribal climate relocation projects. Freezing relocation funds for climate-threatened tribal communities undermined promised federal support to vulnerable populations and highlighted executive control over life-safety resources for marginalized groups. (3 Nov 2025)

8. President Donald Trump publicly vowed to defy a court order on distributing SNAP benefits. Trump's declaration that he would ignore a federal order to pay full SNAP benefits, even as officials quietly complied,

signaled open contempt for judicial authority and used hunger as political leverage. (3 Nov 2025; 5 Nov 2025)

9. President Donald Trump pardoned Binance CEO Changpeng Zhao after his money-laundering conviction. The pardon of crypto executive Changpeng Zhao, whose firm had major dealings with Trump-linked businesses, blurred lines between justice and personal financial interests and suggested clemency could be bought. (2 Nov 2025; 3 Nov 2025)

10. President Donald Trump announced plans for potential U.S. military operations inside Mexico against cartels. Planning cross-border deployments of U.S. troops and intelligence personnel into Mexico to fight cartels expanded contemplated uses of force beyond traditional consent-based cooperation, raising sovereignty and escalation concerns. (2 Nov 2025)

11. President Donald Trump floated possible military action and regime change rhetoric toward Venezuela. Trump's comments that Venezuela's leader's days were numbered and musings about war signaled willingness to threaten regime change abroad, reinforcing personalized control over decisions of war and peace. (2 Nov 2025)

12. President Donald Trump refused to release court-ordered SNAP funds during the shutdown. By again refusing to disburse SNAP benefits despite a federal mandate, Trump used executive control over basic welfare to pressure political opponents and tested the enforceability of judicial orders. (6 Nov 2025)

13. President Donald Trump pardoned Michael McMahon, convicted of acting as a Chinese agent. Pardoning a former police officer convicted in a foreign intimidation plot added to a pattern of clemency for politically resonant or connected offenders, weakening deterrence for abuses tied to state or foreign power. (6 Nov 2025)

14. President Donald Trump continued the longest federal government shutdown while threatening federal workers. Maintaining a record-length shutdown, with threats of withheld back pay and mass firings, used federal employees' livelihoods as leverage in a political standoff and degraded core state capacity. (6 Nov 2025)

15. President Donald Trump signed pardons for 77 individuals involved in efforts to overturn the 2020 election. Mass pardons for key 2020 election-subversion figures shielded allies from federal accountability for attacking electoral outcomes, weakening deterrence against future attempts to overturn democratic results. (7 Nov 2025)

16. President Donald Trump issued seven pardons that initially appeared online with identical signatures. The appearance of mechanically identical signatures on multiple clemency orders, later replaced, raised doubts about

the integrity and individualized nature of presidential pardons as a constitutional safeguard. (7 Nov 2025)

## Institutions and Governance

1. Texas Department of Public Safety suspended issuance of commercial driver's licenses to non-citizens including DACA recipients. Halting commercial licenses for non-citizens in Texas restricted lawful work for many immigrants and DACA recipients, embedding immigration status into economic opportunity and transportation infrastructure. (1 Nov 2025)

2. Federal Aviation Administration warned of reduced air traffic capacity due to unpaid controller absences. FAA warnings that controller shortages from the shutdown would force slower air traffic flows highlighted how budget standoffs can degrade critical safety infrastructure and public mobility. (1 Nov 2025)

3. Federal Aviation Administration announced a 10% reduction in flight capacity at airports because of the shutdown. Cutting scheduled flights by 10% due to unpaid, overworked controllers showed how prolonged funding deadlock can force agencies to curtail essential services and strain public trust in government competence. (5 Nov 2025)

4. Federal Aviation Administration began canceling about 700 flights per day amid controller shortages. Daily cancellation of hundreds of flights across dozens of airports due to shutdown-driven staffing gaps underscored the vulnerability of national infrastructure to partisan budget conflicts. (6 Nov 2025; 7 Nov 2025)

5. Federal Communications Commission voted to allow steep increases in prison phone and video call rates. Raising caps on prison telecom rates by up to 83% increased financial burdens on incarcerated people and their families, prioritizing provider revenue over equitable access to communication. (3 Nov 2025)

6. Federal Communications Commission reinstated a ban on kickbacks in prison phone contracts while soliciting comments on future changes. Restoring a ban on kickbacks to prisons for telecom contracts modestly curbed perverse incentives, though the FCC's openness to revisiting the rule left room for renewed industry capture. (3 Nov 2025)

7. President Donald Trump signed an executive order modifying reciprocal tariff rates with China. Extending reduced tariffs on Chinese imports under a bilateral arrangement used executive trade authority to reshape economic relations, raising questions about Congress's sidelined role in setting tariff policy. (4 Nov 2025)

8. President Donald Trump reduced duties on certain Chinese goods tied to fentanyl supply commitments. Lowering tariffs on Chinese products in exchange for promised fentanyl controls illustrated how emergency trade tools are used as bargaining instruments, blurring lines between public health policy and unilateral economic power. (4 Nov 2025)

9. U.S. Senate Republicans blocked a Democratic resolution to fully fund SNAP during the shutdown. Senate Republicans' refusal to authorize full SNAP funding during the shutdown kept millions facing reduced food aid, using procedural power over appropriations to shape social welfare outcomes. (4 Nov 2025)

10. U.S. Senate rejected a government funding package for the 14th time, prolonging the shutdown. Repeated Senate failure to pass a funding bill entrenched the record shutdown, demonstrating legislative gridlock's capacity to paralyze federal operations and erode confidence in representative governance. (4 Nov 2025)

11. U.S. Census Bureau sought OMB approval to continue the Current Population Survey basic demographics collection. Maintaining the core demographic survey that underpins labor and population statistics preserved a key data source for evidence-based policymaking and democratic accountability. (3 Nov 2025)

12. Environmental Protection Agency issued Significant New Use Rules for several chemical substances. Requiring advance notice before new uses of certain chemicals allowed EPA to review risks proactively, reinforcing regulatory capacity to protect public health and the environment. (4 Nov 2025)

13. Food and Drug Administration scheduled an advisory committee meeting on the V-Wave Ventura heart device. Convenering an expert panel with public input to review a heart-failure device reflected procedural norms of transparent, science-based regulation in medical technology approval. (4 Nov 2025)

14. Environmental Protection Agency set pesticide residue tolerances for cyclobutifluram on several crops. Establishing residue limits for a new pesticide on cotton, lettuce, and soybeans defined legal safety thresholds for food and agricultural production, illustrating routine risk management by regulators. (5 Nov 2025)

15. Federal Reserve injected \$125 billion in short-term liquidity into the banking system. Large-scale liquidity operations by the Fed aimed to stabilize financial markets during economic stress, underscoring the central bank's outsized role in crisis management beyond direct democratic control. (5 Nov 2025)

16. U.S. Senate voted to nullify Trump's reciprocal tariffs in a largely

symbolic rebuke. A bipartisan Senate vote to overturn the administration's reciprocal tariffs asserted Congress's constitutional role over taxation and trade, even though House inaction limited immediate practical effect. (5 Nov 2025)

17. Federal Bureau of Investigation announced a CJIS Advisory Policy Board meeting on national crime information systems. Planning an open advisory meeting on criminal justice information systems maintained formal channels for stakeholder input into how national databases and background checks are governed. (7 Nov 2025)

18. U.S. Congress enacted \$45 billion in funding to expand ICE detention centers. Authorizing tens of billions for new ICE detention capacity for adults and children entrenched a carceral approach to immigration policy and expanded infrastructure for large-scale confinement. (7 Nov 2025)

19. U.S. Senate narrowly defeated a war powers resolution to limit Trump's strikes in Venezuela. The Senate's failure to require congressional approval for further Venezuela strikes left broad discretion with the president over military escalation, reflecting legislative reluctance to reassess war powers. (7 Nov 2025)

20. Federal Reserve and Trump administration officials framed economic problems as caused by the shutdown while downplaying inflation. Administration figures' claims that inflation and grocery prices were falling, contrary to evidence, attempted to shift blame for economic pain away from policy choices and muddied public understanding of economic performance. (7 Nov 2025)

## Civil Rights and Dissent

1. U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement and federal troops conducted militarized Halloween immigration raids in Chicago and Los Angeles. ICE raids backed by troops, masks, and force against protesters during Halloween blurred lines between policing and military operations and spread fear in immigrant communities. (1 Nov 2025; 2 Nov 2025)

2. Federal Bureau of Investigation leadership advanced disputed claims of a Halloween terror plot by young gamers in Michigan. A defense lawyer's denial of any planned terror attack by youths portrayed as gamers raised concerns that FBI rhetoric may have exaggerated threats, potentially stigmatizing ordinary behavior as terrorism. (1 Nov 2025)

3. U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement considered hiring private bounty hunters to track immigrants for arrest. Plans to pay private bounty hunters performance bonuses for locating immigrants would outsource coer-

cive state power to profit-driven actors with limited accountability, heightening risks of abuse. (1 Nov 2025)

4. Illinois and federal courts issued stays blocking deportation of Subramanyam Vedam after his wrongful conviction was overturned. Judicial stays preventing the deportation of a legal permanent resident wrongfully imprisoned for decades showed courts acting as a backstop against compounding injustices in the criminal and immigration systems. (4 Nov 2025)

5. U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement deported Randall Alberto Gamboa Esquivel in a vegetative state, after which he died. ICE's deportation of a gravely ill detainee in a vegetative state, followed by his death abroad, highlighted severe humanitarian and due-process concerns in aggressive deportation practices. (4 Nov 2025)

6. President Donald Trump and Department of Justice pressured prosecutors to pursue political adversaries like James Comey and Letitia James. Using DOJ to target perceived enemies on dubious grounds undermined equal justice and signaled that legal tools could be wielded to intimidate critics and opposition officials. (4 Nov 2025)

7. Los Angeles Police Department released dash-cam video of officers fatally striking a skateboarder with a patrol car. Footage showing officers driving on the wrong side of the road before killing a skateboarder intensified scrutiny of police driving practices and accountability for lethal misconduct. (5 Nov 2025)

8. U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement agents arrested a daycare worker in Chicago using force in front of children. ICE's forcible detention of a daycare worker inside a childcare facility, allegedly slamming her into glass, traumatized children and deepened fears about immigration enforcement intruding into civic spaces. (6 Nov 2025)

9. U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement agents arrested a U.S. citizen father in Los Angeles and drove off with his toddler. An ICE operation where agents left with a citizen toddler after arresting his father, also a citizen, raised alarms about family separation tactics and respect for citizens' rights during raids. (6 Nov 2025)

10. U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement announced a Nashville call center to help law enforcement locate unaccompanied migrant children. Creating a 24/7 data-driven call center to track unaccompanied minors expanded surveillance infrastructure focused on vulnerable children, raising concerns about privacy and potential misuse. (6 Nov 2025)

II. State of Utah planned a large facility for involuntary confinement of unhoused people. Utah's proposal to confine 1,300 unhoused individuals in a centralized campus emphasized coercive rehabilitation over housing, raising

civil liberties concerns about treating poverty as grounds for detention. (6 Nov 2025)

12. U.S. Supreme Court allowed Trump's policy blocking passport sex markers that match gender identity to take effect. Letting the administration enforce a birth-sex-only passport rule curtailed recognition of transgender and non-binary people in federal documents, limiting their ability to live and travel with accurate identification. (6 Nov 2025)

13. U.S. Supreme Court considered taking a case that could revisit nationwide same-sex marriage rights. The Court's potential review of Kim Davis's case opened the door to reexamining Obergefell, putting the legal status of same-sex marriage and LGBTQ+ equality back into question. (7 Nov 2025)

14. Oklahoma District Court approved a lenient youthful offender plea deal for an 18-year-old convicted of multiple rapes. Granting a youthful offender deal with community service and counseling instead of decades in prison for serious sexual assaults sparked outrage and raised questions about equal justice for victims. (7 Nov 2025)

15. Utah and federal officials continued a shutdown that left TSA and other security staff working without pay. The shutdown forced frontline security workers like TSA agents to work unpaid, straining morale and highlighting how political brinkmanship can exploit essential personnel's commitment to public safety. (5 Nov 2025)

## Economic Structure

1. The Trump Administration issued an executive order pressuring drug companies that led Roche to consider pulling \$50 billion from Indiana. An order targeting firms over drug prices prompted Roche to weigh canceling massive Indiana investments, illustrating how aggressive executive economic interventions can destabilize local jobs and tax bases. (2 Nov 2025)

2. The Trump Administration implemented tariffs that discouraged multi-national manufacturing investment in U.S. towns. Tariff policies that hurt firms like Toyota and contributed to layoffs in rural communities showed how trade decisions can shift economic risk onto workers while pursuing geopolitical aims. (2 Nov 2025)

3. The Trump Administration and Congress enacted a major tax cut bill heavily benefiting wealthy individuals and corporations. The large 2025 tax cut shifted resources upward, likely constraining funding for social programs and deepening structural inequality between capital owners and ordinary workers. (3 Nov 2025)

4. Extremity Care and Trump administration arranged a secret \$2.5

million donation toward a White House ballroom while benefiting from a Medicare rule freeze. Allowing Extremity Care to anonymously fund Trump's ballroom while delaying rules that would curb its Medicare revenues suggested a pay-to-play dynamic where regulatory outcomes track undisclosed donations. (4 Nov 2025)

5. The Trump Administration delayed a Biden-era Medicare rule that would have ended coverage for Extremity Care's costly products. Postponing restrictions on high-priced skin substitutes kept Medicare spending on track to surge, favoring a single firm's profits over cost control for a public insurance program. (4 Nov 2025)

6. The Trump Administration proposed a new Medicare payment cap for skin substitutes without limiting coverage to proven products. A proposed cap that still allowed coverage of unproven, expensive skin substitutes balanced modest savings against continued industry revenue, reflecting regulatory compromise shaped by provider lobbying. (4 Nov 2025)

7. The Trump Administration blamed the self-inflicted government shutdown for broader economic weakness. Officials' efforts to attribute economic downturn solely to the shutdown, while ignoring trade and fiscal choices, attempted to deflect responsibility for policy-driven instability affecting workers and markets. (7 Nov 2025)

8. The Trump Administration pursued a trade war with China that reduced U.S. soybean exports and increased rare earth dependence. Escalating trade conflict with China cut key agricultural exports and tightened Chinese control over rare earths, undercutting U.S. producers while failing to secure clear strategic gains. (7 Nov 2025)

9. The Trump Administration maintained export controls blocking Nvidia's advanced chips from being sold to China. Keeping strict export controls on Nvidia's AI chips prioritized national security concerns over corporate lobbying, shaping the global tech balance and supply chains through state intervention. (7 Nov 2025)

10. Colorado voters approved higher taxes on high-income households to fund universal school meals and cafeteria wages. Colorado's decision to tax top earners to guarantee free school meals and better cafeteria pay used progressive taxation to strengthen social infrastructure and child nutrition. (6 Nov 2025)

11. Kyoto city government adopted a high accommodation tax on luxury hotel stays to curb overtourism. Kyoto's new tiered lodging tax sought to manage tourism's strain on urban infrastructure while raising revenue, illustrating local fiscal tools to balance economic activity and public goods. (7 Nov 2025)

## Information, Memory, and Manipulation

1. CBS and Donald Trump settled a lawsuit over edited 60 Minutes footage for \$16 million amid a pending merger review. CBS's large payout to Trump while seeking government approval for a merger suggested that media outlets may temper editorial independence to secure regulatory favor, chilling critical coverage. (2 Nov 2025)

2. The Trump Administration and Department of Justice investigated California's redistricting referendum while Trump labeled it a rigged scam. Launching a DOJ probe into California's voter-approved redistricting measure, framed by Trump as criminal fraud, cast doubt on legitimate electoral processes and fed narratives of systemic rigging. (3 Nov 2025)

3. The Trump Administration used SNAP funding narratives and shutdown messaging to pressure opponents. Portraying defiance of SNAP court orders as constitutional and blaming others for resulting hardship manipulated legal and economic narratives to justify withholding aid from vulnerable families. (5 Nov 2025)

4. The Trump Administration officials claimed inflation and grocery prices were falling despite contrary evidence. Officials' rosy claims about prices during an economic downturn exemplified selective presentation of economic data to deflect criticism and shape public perception of policy performance. (7 Nov 2025)

5. Cornell University and Trump administration agreed to share admissions data and adopt the administration's civil-rights interpretation to restore funding. Cornell's settlement tying research funds to acceptance of the administration's anti-diversity civil-rights framework showed how federal leverage can steer university policies and campus narratives. (7 Nov 2025)

6. The Trump Administration proposed a university funding compact rewarding institutions that advance its conservative agenda. Offering preferential federal funding to universities that align with a conservative policy agenda sought to reshape higher education's ideological landscape through financial incentives. (7 Nov 2025)

7. House Speaker Mike Johnson and U.S. House of Representatives delayed swearing in Adelita Grijalva, blocking her from accessing Epstein-related records. By withholding the oath from a duly elected member, House leadership impeded her ability to sign a discharge petition for Epstein files, keeping sensitive records from congressional and public scrutiny. (5 Nov 2025)

8. Department of Justice abruptly ended an investigation into Jeffrey Epstein's alleged co-conspirators. Shutting down a probe into Epstein's network despite extensive victim testimony fueled accusations of a cover-up

protecting powerful associates and limiting public knowledge of elite wrongdoing. (4 Nov 2025)

9. The Trump Administration and courts oversaw mass pardons and procedural moves that shaped public memory of elite crimes. Mass clemency for 2020 election subversion figures, combined with stalled Epstein disclosures, curated which elite abuses remain prosecutable or visible, influencing how future generations understand these episodes. (7 Nov 2025)



## CHAPTER 17

### **WEEK 43 (8 NOV 2025 – 14 NOV 2025): MEMORY AND LAW AS WEAPONS**

*A settled pattern emerges as the executive bends welfare, enforcement, and even museums to its will while courts and Congress mount scattered, fragile checks.*

This week, an executive increasingly disregards the law, using clemency, security forces, and administrative powers to protect allies and punish enemies while weakening oversight. The strongest pressure targets the rule of law: mass pardons for 2020 election conspirators and white-collar offenders, preferential treatment for Ghislaine Maxwell, politicized prosecutions of Trump critics, and efforts to dismantle the CFPB and SNAP safety net all show that law is now being used as a weapon rather than a boundary. Simultaneously, immigration crackdowns (Operation Midway Blitz, CBP One termination, deportations to El Salvador) and ICE abuses reveal security forces acting according to regime priorities over rights, even as courts in Chicago, Portland, and Illinois resist. Information and memory are contested: AI-generated campaign videos, Smithsonian content control, and museum defunding contrast with bipartisan efforts to release Epstein files and related emails. Congress ends the historic shutdown on terms favorable to the executive, highlighting legislative weakness, yet the discharge petition on Epstein points to ongoing potential for cross-party transparency. Internationally, tariff politics, reduced Ukraine aid, and UK intelligence tensions deepen concerns about cronyism and the weakening of democratic alliances.

## Power and Authority

1. President Donald Trump pardoned Binance founder Changpeng Zhao after a major stablecoin deal. Trump's pardon of Binance founder CZ, following a large stablecoin arrangement with a Trump-linked firm, used clemency to benefit a powerful financial ally, weakening equal accountability for corporate crime. (8 Nov 2025; 11 Nov 2025)

2. President Donald Trump proposed abolishing private health insurance in favor of small direct payouts. Trump's proposal to replace health insurance with limited government payouts would centralize life-and-death healthcare decisions in the executive while exposing sick and poor Americans to catastrophic costs. (8 Nov 2025)

3. President Donald Trump urged Senate Republicans to abolish the filibuster during the shutdown. Trump's call to end the Senate filibuster during a shutdown sought to strip minority-party leverage over legislation, concentrating lawmaking power in a narrow partisan majority aligned with the executive. (8 Nov 2025)

4. President Donald Trump and allies rejected a one-year extension of Affordable Care Act subsidies. The administration's rejection of a temporary ACA subsidy extension during a shutdown used executive influence to block a popular lifeline for healthcare access, heightening executive leverage over social rights. (9 Nov 2025)

5. President Donald Trump issued mass pardons to 2020 election subversion figures. Trump's sweeping pardons for dozens involved in efforts to overturn the 2020 election signaled that attempts to subvert electoral outcomes can be shielded by presidential clemency, undermining deterrence and rule of law. (9 Nov 2025; 10 Nov 2025)

6. President Donald Trump pardoned Troy Lake for disabling diesel emissions controls. By pardoning a diesel emissions violator, Trump used clemency to relieve an environmental offender of consequences, weakening regulatory enforcement and signaling tolerance for harmful corporate misconduct. (9 Nov 2025)

7. President Donald Trump pardoned Michael McMahon and commuted Jonathan Braun's sentence. Trump's clemency for a convicted foreign agent and a Kushner-linked fraudster rewarded personal and political connections, eroding the expectation that serious crimes face impartial punishment. (10 Nov 2025)

8. President Donald Trump pardoned Robert Harshbarger Jr., husband of a sitting member of Congress. Trump's quiet pardon of a lawmaker's spouse convicted of healthcare fraud used presidential power to favor a political

insider, weakening deterrence for white-collar crime tied to public programs. (10 Nov 2025)

9. President Donald Trump issued a series of pardons and commutations for political and business allies. A broader wave of pardons and commutations for January 6 participants and financially connected allies showed clemency being used as a loyalty and patronage tool rather than a neutral justice mechanism. (11 Nov 2025)

10. President Donald Trump announced plans to pull federal funding from New York City. Trump's plan to strip federal funds from New York City to sabotage a newly elected progressive mayor weaponized central fiscal power against a disfavored local government and its voters. (10 Nov 2025)

11. President Donald Trump directed the Justice Department to investigate Democrats' ties to Jeffrey Epstein. Trump's public order to DOJ to probe political opponents over Epstein ties exemplified using prosecutorial power as a partisan weapon rather than an impartial tool of justice. (13 Nov 2025)

12. President Donald Trump claimed a false agreement with China on rare earth export controls. Trump's inaccurate claim of a rare earths deal with China misled the public about a key strategic supply issue, obscuring real policy risks in a domain central to national security. (11 Nov 2025)

13. President Donald Trump granted a tariff break to Switzerland after receiving valuable gifts. Granting Switzerland favorable tariffs soon after Trump received gold gifts from Swiss industry blurred the line between national trade policy and personal enrichment, undermining trust in impartial economic governance. (13 Nov 2025)

14. President Donald Trump scaled back U.S. aid to Ukraine and other European allies. Trump's reduction of aid to Ukraine and European allies weakened support for states resisting Russian aggression, signaling a retreat from defending democratic partners abroad. (13 Nov 2025)

15. President Donald Trump signed an executive order restructuring tariffs on certain agricultural imports. Trump's order modifying reciprocal agricultural tariffs adjusted trade barriers by decree, illustrating how executive trade powers can quickly reshape economic conditions for domestic producers and foreign partners. (14 Nov 2025)

16. President Donald Trump signed a spending package ending the 43-day federal government shutdown. By signing the shutdown-ending funding bill after prolonged brinkmanship, Trump restored federal operations while having leveraged service disruptions to extract concessions on his policy priorities. (13 Nov 2025)

17. President Donald Trump issued an executive order on foster care data and services. Trump's foster care executive order directed federal agencies to

modernize child welfare systems and partner with faith-based groups, expanding executive influence over how vulnerable children receive state support. (13 Nov 2025)

18. President Donald Trump pardoned British billionaire Joe Lewis for insider trading. Trump's pardon of billionaire Joe Lewis, convicted of insider trading, reinforced a pattern in which wealthy offenders can secure relief from punishment through presidential favor. (13 Nov 2025)

19. President Donald Trump kept national parks open during the shutdown despite mass furloughs. Keeping parks open without adequate staff during the shutdown prioritized optics over safety and stewardship, using executive discretion in ways that risked public resources and visitor welfare. (14 Nov 2025)

20. President Donald Trump publicly threatened a \$1bn lawsuit against the BBC over a documentary edit. Trump's threat of a massive defamation suit against the BBC over a misleading edit signaled willingness to use personal legal threats to chill critical media coverage. (11 Nov 2025)

21. President Donald Trump announced a plan to issue \$2,000 tariff-funded dividend checks. Trump's promise of \$2,000 tariff "dividends" framed trade policy as a personal cash giveaway, using executive rhetoric to sell a questionable economic scheme that depends on congressional approval. (8 Nov 2025; 9 Nov 2025)

22. President Donald Trump proposed 50-year federally backed mortgages as housing policy. Trump's push for 50-year FHA-style mortgages would lock households into longer debt to address housing costs, expanding executive influence over credit structures with long-term distributional effects. (8 Nov 2025; 11 Nov 2025)

23. President Donald Trump publicly promised \$2,000 checks as an alternative to ACA subsidies. Trump's offer of one-time \$2,000 checks instead of sustained ACA subsidies used headline cash promises to deflect from weakening ongoing healthcare support, shifting risk back onto individuals. (9 Nov 2025)

24. President Donald Trump used Truth Social to frame Epstein investigations as a partisan hoax. By branding scrutiny of his Epstein ties as a hoax while ordering probes of Democrats, Trump framed accountability efforts as partisan attacks, reinforcing a narrative that delegitimizes independent oversight. (13 Nov 2025)

25. President Donald Trump kept SNAP funding frozen during litigation over emergency benefits. Trump's decision to seek a Supreme Court stay on court-ordered SNAP payments used executive litigation strategy to maintain a freeze on food aid for tens of millions during a shutdown. (8 Nov 2025)

## Institutions and Governance

1. Bipartisan members of Congress defeated a proposal to roll back state food safety laws. Lawmakers from both parties blocked an industry-backed effort to weaken state food safety standards, preserving subnational regulatory authority that protects public health from centralized deregulatory pressure. (8 Nov 2025)
2. Senate Republicans proposed replacing Obamacare with health savings accounts. Senate Republicans' plan to swap ACA coverage for health savings accounts would shift healthcare risk onto individuals, using legislative power to narrow collective guarantees of medical security. (8 Nov 2025)
3. Senate Democratic leadership offered a shutdown-ending compromise tied to ACA premium tax credits. Senate Democrats' offer to trade a continuing resolution for a one-year ACA tax credit extension sought to link reopening government to preserving healthcare subsidies, but its rejection exposed partisan deadlock over social policy. (8 Nov 2025; 9 Nov 2025)
4. Senate Democrats advanced a package of spending bills and a short-term funding measure. Senate Democrats moved a funding package that would end the shutdown, reverse mass federal firings, and secure back pay, using appropriations power to stabilize the civil service and social programs like SNAP. (8 Nov 2025)
5. U.S. Senate advanced and passed a stopgap funding bill to end the shutdown. The Senate's narrow votes to advance and approve a continuing resolution ended the record shutdown while omitting ACA subsidy extensions, highlighting both institutional capacity to reopen government and limits on securing social protections. (9 Nov 2025; 10 Nov 2025; 11 Nov 2025)
6. Eight Senate Democrats joined Republicans to reopen government without securing health or SNAP protections. By siding with Republicans to reopen government without firm guarantees on healthcare or food aid, several Democrats prioritized ending the shutdown over leveraging it for expanded social rights. (9 Nov 2025; 10 Nov 2025)
7. U.S. House of Representatives returned from a 50-day absence to vote on a shutdown-ending bill. After weeks of inaction, the House reconvened to consider a Senate-driven funding bill, underscoring how leadership's control of the calendar can delay resolution of crises affecting federal services. (12 Nov 2025)
8. House Budget Committee Chair Jodey Arrington announced he would not seek reelection in 2026. Arrington's planned departure as House Budget chair added to a wave of Republican retirements, foreshadowing shifts in

fiscal leadership that could alter future budget priorities and oversight. (10 Nov 2025)

9. Utah State Representative Matt MacPherson moved to impeach a judge over a redistricting ruling. A Utah legislator's bid to impeach Judge Dianna Gibson for rejecting a GOP-drawn map threatened judicial independence by punishing a court for enforcing fair representation standards. (10 Nov 2025)

10. U.S. Supreme Court agreed to hear a challenge to Mississippi's late-arriving mail ballot rule. The Court's decision to review Mississippi's five-day mail ballot grace period could reshape how many states count timely mailed votes, with major implications for ballot access and election administration. (10 Nov 2025)

11. Utah District Judge Dianna Gibson approved a new congressional map creating a Democratic-leaning seat. Judge Gibson's adoption of a citizen-proposed map that consolidated Salt Lake County into one district curbed partisan gerrymandering and improved prospects for competitive representation in Utah. (10 Nov 2025; 11 Nov 2025)

12. Oklahoma Governor Kevin Stitt granted clemency to death row inmate Tremane Wood. Governor Stitt's commutation of Tremane Wood's death sentence to life without parole, following concerns about fairness and racial bias, showed a state executive using clemency to correct potential miscarriages of justice. (12 Nov 2025)

13. U.S. Supreme Court extended a stay allowing SNAP funding to remain frozen. By extending an administrative stay on a lower court order to release \$4bn in SNAP benefits, the Supreme Court kept food aid on hold for 42 million people while legal arguments continued. (12 Nov 2025)

14. U.S. Department of Justice joined a lawsuit challenging California's new congressional map. DOJ's decision to side with California Republicans against a Newsom-backed map aligned federal legal power with partisan redistricting claims, raising questions about neutral enforcement of voting rights. (14 Nov 2025)

15. U.S. Justice Department filed a court claim attacking the CFPB's funding mechanism. DOJ's argument that the CFPB cannot lawfully draw funds from the Federal Reserve advanced a legal strategy that could cripple the consumer watchdog's operations without direct congressional repeal. (11 Nov 2025)

16. Justice Department Office of Legal Counsel issued an opinion restricting CFPB access to Federal Reserve funds. OLC's opinion that the CFPB cannot draw money while Fed earnings are negative provided legal cover for starving the agency of resources, weakening independent consumer financial oversight. (11 Nov 2025)

17. White House budget director Russell Vought announced plans to shut down the CFPB within three months. Vought's plan to close the CFPB signaled an aggressive executive push to dismantle a key post-crisis consumer regulator, shifting financial power away from public oversight. (11 Nov 2025)

18. U.S. Senate and House leadership included and then moved to repeal a DOJ-surveillance damages provision for senators. A little-noticed rider letting senators sue DOJ for surveillance damages, and Speaker Johnson's quick move to repeal it, highlighted how self-dealing provisions can slip into must-pass bills and then be politically corrected. (12 Nov 2025)

19. Representative Sean Casten publicly criticized the DOJ-surveillance damages provision for senators. Casten's criticism of a clause allowing senators to profit from surveillance lawsuits spotlighted ethical concerns about lawmakers writing personal financial benefits into federal law. (12 Nov 2025)

20. House Speaker Mike Johnson scheduled an early House vote on releasing Epstein-related DOJ files. Johnson's decision to hold a vote on the Epstein files bill earlier than required acknowledged a successful discharge petition and showed leadership responding to bipartisan transparency pressure despite personal opposition. (13 Nov 2025)

21. Representative Adelita Grijalva was sworn in and became the 218th signer on an Epstein discharge petition. Grijalva's swearing-in and signature gave a discharge petition the 218 votes needed to force a House vote on releasing Epstein files, demonstrating how rank-and-file members can bypass leadership to advance transparency. (12 Nov 2025)

22. House of Representatives saw a discharge petition reach 218 signatures to compel an Epstein files vote. A bipartisan discharge petition reaching 218 signatures forced a House vote on releasing Epstein-related DOJ files, using procedural tools to overcome leadership resistance to disclosure. (13 Nov 2025)

23. House Democrats blocked unanimous consent on the Epstein Files Transparency Act. By objecting to unanimous consent on the Epstein transparency bill, House Democrats ensured a recorded vote, preventing members from avoiding public accountability on a high-profile disclosure question. (13 Nov 2025)

24. Representatives Marjorie Taylor Greene, Nancy Mace, Thomas Massie, and Tim Burchett took divergent public positions on the Epstein files petition and vote. Republican members split over the Epstein petition—some championing transparency, others resisting—illustrating intra-party tensions over exposing potential elite misconduct. (12 Nov 2025)

25. Former President Donald Trump and senior law enforcement officials attempted to pressure House members to withdraw support from the Epstein

discharge petition. Trump's outreach to lawmakers, including a Situation Room meeting with Boebert, to dissuade support for the Epstein petition showed executive-aligned actors trying to shape congressional oversight agendas behind closed doors. (13 Nov 2025)

26. House Oversight Committee Democrats released subpoenaed Epstein estate emails into the congressional record. Oversight Democrats' publication of thousands of Epstein-related emails, including references to Trump, used committee powers to expand the public record on elite abuse and potential political leverage. (12 Nov 2025; 13 Nov 2025)

27. House Oversight Committee Republicans released 20,000 pages of Epstein documents on reputation management efforts. Republican Oversight members' release of extensive Epstein PR and media-manipulation records broadened public understanding of how a wealthy predator tried to shape information flows after conviction. (14 Nov 2025)

28. Georgia Prosecuting Attorneys' Council Director Pete Skandalakis appointed himself to continue the Georgia Trump election interference case. Skandalakis's move to take over the stalled Georgia election interference prosecution kept alive a key state-level case against Trump, preserving a remaining avenue for accountability outside federal control. (14 Nov 2025)

29. U.S. Bankruptcy Court moved toward approving a \$7bn settlement with Purdue Pharma. A federal judge's plan to approve a multibillion-dollar Purdue Pharma settlement, converting the company into a nonprofit, represented a major institutional response to corporate responsibility in the opioid crisis. (14 Nov 2025)

30. Georgia State Election Board settled a lawsuit over use of private emails for official business. Georgia's election board agreed to stop using private and ephemeral messaging for official work, strengthening transparency and record-keeping in an office central to election administration. (12 Nov 2025)

31. University of Texas at Dallas professors Ben Wright and Rosemary Admiral sued the university and state officials over alleged retaliation for protest arrests. Two professors' lawsuit claiming retaliatory restrictions after peaceful protest arrests used the courts to challenge campus and state actions that may chill academic and political expression. (14 Nov 2025)

32. U.S. District Judge Karin Immergut issued a final order blocking National Guard deployment to Portland. Judge Immergut's permanent injunction against deploying National Guard troops to Portland without credible evidence of widespread violence reinforced judicial checks on militarized responses to protest. (8 Nov 2025)

33. Multiple federal judges in Illinois blocked Trump administration attempts to deploy National Guard troops for immigration enforcement. Court rulings preventing National Guard deployments to Illinois for immigration operations upheld legal limits on using military forces in domestic law enforcement. (11 Nov 2025)

34. U.S. District Judge Sara Ellis issued a restraining order limiting ICE agents' use of force in Chicago. Judge Ellis's order restricting ICE force in Chicago imposed judicial oversight on aggressive immigration tactics, aiming to protect residents' rights during federal operations. (11 Nov 2025)

35. U.S. District Judge Jeffrey Cummings ordered release on bond of hundreds detained in Chicago immigration raids. Judge Cummings's order to release many Operation Midway Blitz detainees on bond and bar coercive "voluntary" deportations enforced due process protections against warrantless mass arrests. (12 Nov 2025)

36. Federal judge in Indiana ruled an ICE arrest of a Chicago daycare worker unlawful and ordered a bond hearing. A judge's finding that ICE unlawfully detained daycare worker Diana Santillana Galeano, and order for a prompt bond hearing, reinforced judicial oversight of immigration detention practices. (13 Nov 2025)

37. Former FBI Director James Comey and New York Attorney General Letitia James challenged the legality of a Trump-era U.S. attorney appointment used to indict them. Comey and James's motion to dismiss charges based on an allegedly unlawful U.S. attorney appointment tested whether the executive can bypass Senate confirmation to target political adversaries. (13 Nov 2025)

38. U.S. District Judge Mark Wolf resigned in protest over perceived partisan misuse of law by the Trump administration. Judge Wolf's resignation, citing misuse of law for partisan ends, was an extraordinary signal from the judiciary about erosion of legal norms under executive pressure. (8 Nov 2025)

## Civil Rights and Dissent

1. U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement agents conducted an arrest in Massachusetts where a man collapsed while holding a child. A controversial ICE arrest in Fitchburg, where a man fell unconscious while clutching a child, highlighted the human costs and public backlash surrounding aggressive immigration enforcement tactics. (8 Nov 2025)

2. U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement and CBP conducted Oper-

ation Midway Blitz raids across Chicago. Operation Midway Blitz's mass raids and alleged warrantless detentions in Chicago turned immigrant neighborhoods into "ghost towns," illustrating how large-scale enforcement can chill community life and rights. (13 Nov 2025)

3. U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement pepper-sprayed an Illinois family including a one-year-old, according to allegations. Reports that ICE agents pepper-sprayed a couple, their baby, and a relative in Cicero underscored concerns about excessive force and trauma inflicted on immigrant families during enforcement. (11 Nov 2025)

4. U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement terminated the CBP One app used for legal asylum appointments. Ending the CBP One app sharply reduced legal pathways for asylum seekers at the southern border, pushing more people into irregular crossings and weakening procedural protections. (12 Nov 2025)

5. The Trump Administration sent 252 Venezuelan men to a notorious El Salvador prison as "irregular warfare". Transferring hundreds of Venezuelan men to a harsh Salvadoran prison with limited due process framed migration as warfare and outsourced detention to a foreign facility with reported abuses. (8 Nov 2025)

6. The Trump Administration intensified deportation operations nationwide, including in Eagle Pass, Texas. Escalated deportation raids that swept up parents, appeared at schools, and mistakenly detained citizens in places like Eagle Pass deepened fear and legal uncertainty for immigrant communities. (12 Nov 2025)

7. The Trump Administration imposed new biometric tracking and registration rules on Canadian visitors. New requirements for photographing all non-U.S. visitors on entry and exit, and for Canadians staying over 30 days to register whereabouts, expanded surveillance of ordinary travelers. (9 Nov 2025)

8. U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement and DHS detained British commentator Sami Hamdi and labeled him a terrorist sympathizer. ICE's detention and forced departure of Sami Hamdi, apparently tied to his political speech on Israel, showed how immigration powers can be used to sideline foreign critics without formal charges. (10 Nov 2025; 14 Nov 2025)

9. Local police in Sampson County, North Carolina cooperated with ICE to entrap undocumented workers. Sampson County police collaboration with ICE to ensnare undocumented workers blurred local policing with federal immigration enforcement, heightening vulnerability for immigrant laborers. (11 Nov 2025)

10. Fullerton Police Department and an ICE agent were involved in an incident where an ICE agent pointed a gun at a woman filming him. A California officer's intervention when an ICE agent pointed a gun at a woman recording him highlighted tensions between local non-cooperation policies and federal agents' confrontational tactics. (11 Nov 2025)

11. Texas Governor Greg Abbott expanded Operation Lone Star with dangerous river buoys in the Rio Grande. Abbott's deployment of saw-bladed buoys in the Rio Grande under Operation Lone Star militarized the border in ways that threatened migrants' safety and the river environment. (12 Nov 2025)

12. The Trump Administration and U.S. Southern Command deployed the USS Gerald R Ford to Latin American waters in an anti-drug campaign. Sending the world's largest aircraft carrier to Latin America as part of a "war on drugs" escalated military presence near Venezuela, raising risks of conflict under a law-enforcement pretext. (11 Nov 2025)

13. The Trump Administration kept national parks open during the shutdown without adequate staffing. Leaving parks open while most rangers were furloughed created safety hazards and resource damage, showing how shutdown tactics can compromise public access and environmental stewardship. (14 Nov 2025)

14. The Trump Administration withheld SNAP benefits, prompting local food aid mobilization. Federal withholding of SNAP benefits forced local groups in North Carolina to fill gaps, shifting responsibility for basic subsistence from national safety nets to ad hoc community efforts. (11 Nov 2025)

15. The Trump Administration supported Israeli actions in Gaza and the West Bank described as genocidal by critics. Continued U.S. backing for destructive operations in Gaza and the West Bank drew accusations of complicity in grave human rights abuses, affecting America's global democratic credibility. (11 Nov 2025)

16. The Trump Administration sent Venezuelan detainees to a harsh foreign prison and used private detention centers with alleged abuses. Use of a notorious Salvadoran prison and a CoreCivic-run ICE facility with alleged inhumane conditions showed coercive detention outsourced to less accountable environments. (8 Nov 2025; 13 Nov 2025)

17. The Trump Administration deployed aggressive ICE operations in Chicago despite court limits. Continuing aggressive ICE raids in Chicago under Operation Midway Blitz, even as courts imposed restraints, underscored tensions between federal enforcement priorities and judicially protected rights. (11 Nov 2025; 12 Nov 2025; 13 Nov 2025)

18. The Trump Administration threatened air traffic controllers who refused to work unpaid during the shutdown. Trump's threats of "negative marks" and loss of severance for controllers who would not work without pay, paired with bonuses for loyalists, used economic coercion to suppress labor resistance. (10 Nov 2025)

19. Delta Air Lines settled a lawsuit alleging sexual harassment and retaliation for union support. Delta's settlement with a former flight attendant who alleged harassment and retaliation for pro-union speech highlighted ongoing vulnerabilities for workers challenging corporate power. (11 Nov 2025)

20. Starkville Police Department arrested a student for antisemitic harassment of Dave Portnoy. Police arrest of a student who shouted antisemitic slurs and threw coins at a public figure showed law enforcement responding to hate incidents while raising questions about speech and public order boundaries. (11 Nov 2025)

21. University of Kentucky banned a tenured professor from teaching after his comments on Israel. The university's ban on Professor Ramsi Woodcock from the law school over his Israel-related remarks prompted a First Amendment lawsuit, testing academic freedom and the use of antisemitism definitions in campus discipline. (13 Nov 2025)

22. University of Texas at Dallas and state officials restricted campus access for professors after protest arrests, prompting litigation. UT Dallas's restrictions on two professors following peaceful protest arrests, now challenged in court, raised concerns about universities retaliating against faculty activism. (14 Nov 2025)

23. Ready the Ground Training Team and Durham civic groups organized a large workshop on responding to ICE operations. A Durham workshop training hundreds on how to respond to ICE actions built community capacity to assert rights and support vulnerable neighbors under aggressive immigration enforcement. (11 Nov 2025)

24. Local Democratic groups in Alamance County, North Carolina held a town hall on the state budget and Medicaid funding amid federal cuts. A town hall on budget and Medicaid issues fostered public engagement with fiscal decisions that shape access to healthcare and social services at the state level. (11 Nov 2025)

25. Anti-Defamation League launched an initiative to monitor New York City's mayor-elect for antisemitism. The ADL's plan to track Mayor-elect Zohran Mamdani's statements for antisemitism reflected growing use of organized monitoring in polarized debates over speech, identity, and governance. (14 Nov 2025)

26. Survivors of Jeffrey Epstein and Ghislaine Maxwell delivered a letter

urging Congress to vote on the Epstein Files Transparency Act. Two dozen survivors' appeal to Congress for a vote on releasing Epstein files centered victims' voices in a push for transparency and accountability for elite sexual abuse networks. (13 Nov 2025)

27. The Trump Administration and U.S. Navy used military deployments and airstrikes in a Caribbean "war on drugs". Airstrikes on suspected drug boats and carrier deployments in the Caribbean, which led the UK to halt intelligence sharing, showed how militarized drug policy can strain alliances and risk civilian harm. (9 Nov 2025; 10 Nov 2025; 11 Nov 2025)

28. The Trump Administration supported aggressive Israeli military actions criticized as genocidal. U.S. backing for destructive operations in Gaza and the West Bank, described by critics as genocidal, raised questions about America's commitment to human rights and self-determination abroad. (11 Nov 2025)

## Economic Structure

1. U.S. Department of Agriculture ordered states to undo full November SNAP benefit payments and claw back funds. USDA's directive to reverse and recoup SNAP benefits during a shutdown used administrative power to retract basic food support, deepening economic insecurity for low-income households. (9 Nov 2025; 11 Nov 2025)

2. U.S. Environmental Protection Agency proposed weakening PFAS chemical reporting requirements. EPA's proposal to exempt many low-percentage or byproduct PFAS uses from reporting reduced transparency about toxic chemicals, favoring industry convenience over environmental and public health protections. (10 Nov 2025)

3. U.S. Environmental Protection Agency approved Utah's interstate ozone transport plan under the Clean Air Act. EPA's approval of Utah's ozone transport plan affirmed a state's compliance with national air standards, showing routine regulatory oversight functioning amid broader politicization. (10 Nov 2025)

4. U.S. Environmental Protection Agency extended the comment period and postponed a scientific meeting on D4 chemical risks. EPA's extension of the D4 risk evaluation comment period and postponement of a science advisory meeting maintained public input opportunities despite shutdown disruptions, supporting more informed chemical regulation. (13 Nov 2025)

5. U.S. Environmental Protection Agency extended compliance deadlines for methylene chloride workplace protections. EPA's extension of compliance dates for non-federal labs on methylene chloride rules balanced safety

requirements with operational capacity, affecting how quickly workplaces must adopt stronger protections. (13 Nov 2025)

6. U.S. Environmental Protection Agency extended postponement of certain trichloroethylene regulation provisions amid litigation. By delaying parts of its TCE rule while court challenges proceed, EPA kept contested restrictions on hold, illustrating how litigation can slow implementation of health-protective regulations. (14 Nov 2025)

7. U.S. Environmental Protection Agency announced availability of environmental impact statements for public review. EPA's notice of new environmental impact statements, including for a Texas ship channel project, supported public scrutiny of major infrastructure decisions that shape local economies and ecosystems. (14 Nov 2025)

8. U.S. Environmental Protection Agency granted Texas primacy over Class VI carbon sequestration wells. EPA's approval of Texas's primacy for Class VI injection wells shifted key carbon sequestration permitting authority to a state regulator, affecting oversight of a growing climate-related industry. (14 Nov 2025)

9. Fannie Mae and Federal Housing Finance Agency leadership removed watchdogs and ethics officials amid probes into political data misuse. The firing of Fannie Mae watchdogs and FHFA ethics staff during investigations into alleged political targeting and data misuse weakened internal checks at a major housing finance institution. (10 Nov 2025; 11 Nov 2025; 12 Nov 2025)

10. FHFA Director Bill Pulte politicized the housing regulator and attacked perceived opponents. Pulte's public accusations against officials like Adam Schiff and Letitia James, and pressure on Fed leadership, blurred the line between neutral housing regulation and partisan combat. (11 Nov 2025)

11. Fannie Mae leadership experienced a leak of confidential mortgage pricing data to a competitor. A leak of Fannie Mae's confidential pricing data to a rival raised concerns about collusion and market manipulation in a core public-private mortgage institution. (13 Nov 2025)

12. South Dakota Governor Kristi Noem's administration bypassed competitive bidding for a \$200m anti-immigration ad campaign. Awarding a massive DHS-style ad contract to a politically connected firm without open bidding used public funds for ideological messaging while undermining procurement fairness. (13 Nov 2025)

13. Trump Organization and Coast Guard-run exchanges began selling Trump-branded wine and cider in military stores. Allowing Trump-branded products into tax-advantaged military exchanges monetized public facilities for the president's private business, blurring lines between service to troops and self-enrichment. (8 Nov 2025)

14. The Trump Administration economic team admitted hollowing out the Bureau of Labor Statistics and manipulating data. A top adviser's admission that the administration was "concocting" inflation and employment numbers signaled systemic politicization of core economic statistics vital for democratic accountability. (13 Nov 2025)

15. The Trump Administration and USDA withheld and reversed SNAP benefits during the shutdown. The administration's sustained withholding and clawback of SNAP funds during a shutdown used food assistance as a fiscal and political lever, intensifying hardship for poor families. (8 Nov 2025; 9 Nov 2025; 11 Nov 2025)

16. American Alliance of Museums and federal grant-making agencies reported widespread loss of government funding for museums under Trump. A survey showing one-third of U.S. museums losing federal grants highlighted how funding cuts to cultural institutions reduce access to public goods like education and shared history. (11 Nov 2025)

17. Beam, Eight Sleep, and Rocket Money sponsored Tucker Carlson's podcast despite extremist content. Corporate sponsorships of Carlson's show after a friendly interview with white supremacist Nick Fuentes funneled advertising money to a platform amplifying extremist rhetoric, intertwining commerce and harmful political speech. (10 Nov 2025)

18. Rocket Money ended its sponsorship of Tucker Carlson's podcast after public scrutiny. Rocket Money's withdrawal from Carlson's show under pressure showed how consumer and media accountability can push firms to reconsider funding for extremist-aligned outlets. (12 Nov 2025)

19. European Commission worked on new rules to speed energy project permitting and grid connections. The Commission's effort to streamline energy permitting aimed to strengthen Europe's energy infrastructure and economic resilience, which underpin democratic stability. (13 Nov 2025)

20. German government maintained a ban on nuclear energy despite high industrial power costs. Germany's continued nuclear ban contributed to higher industrial electricity prices, illustrating how energy policy choices can strain economic competitiveness and fiscal capacity. (13 Nov 2025)

21. United Kingdom government scrapped new offshore oil and gas exploration projects. The UK's halt to new offshore oil and gas exploration advanced climate goals but raised concerns about energy security and costs, affecting economic conditions that shape political stability. (13 Nov 2025)

22. The Trump Administration imposed tariffs on European goods, escalating trade tensions. New U.S. tariffs on European imports strained transatlantic trade, risking retaliatory measures and economic disruption that can weaken democratic alliances. (13 Nov 2025)

23. The Trump Administration and FHFA Director Bill Pulte advanced a 50-year mortgage proposal through federal housing channels. The 50-year mortgage plan, championed by Pulte, would reshape mortgage markets in ways critics say favor lenders and politically connected actors over long-term homeowner equity. (8 Nov 2025; 11 Nov 2025)

## Information, Memory, and Manipulation

1. Right-wing outlet The Blaze and allied influencers published and amplified an unverified story naming a former Capitol Police officer as the January 6 pipe bomber. The Blaze's speculative identification of a supposed J6 pipe bomber, widely echoed without solid evidence, exemplified disinformation that can endanger individuals and erode trust in investigations. (8 Nov 2025)

2. The Trump Administration and Smithsonian Institution initiated a review of museum exhibits deemed overly negative about U.S. history. A White House-driven review of Smithsonian content for being "overly negative" about U.S. history pressured museums to soften critical narratives about race and injustice. (11 Nov 2025)

3. President Donald Trump signed an executive order directing the Smithsonian to remove "improper, divisive, or anti-American" content. Trump's order targeting Smithsonian exhibits, especially on African American history, used executive power to steer public memory toward sanitized, nationalist narratives. (11 Nov 2025)

4. The Trump Administration cut federal grants and contracts to museums nationwide. Significant funding losses for museums under Trump constrained cultural institutions' ability to provide inclusive programming, indirectly shaping which histories and communities receive public attention. (11 Nov 2025)

5. House Oversight Committee released emails showing Epstein's efforts to manage media and online search results. Newly released Epstein documents detailed sophisticated campaigns to bury negative coverage and manipulate search results, revealing how wealth can shape public narratives about criminal conduct. (14 Nov 2025)

6. House Oversight Committee and allied media released emails contradicting Trump's claims of ignorance about Epstein's crimes. Emails stating that Trump "knew about the girls" and spent hours at Epstein's house with a victim undermined his public denials, reshaping the factual record on his relationship with Epstein. (12 Nov 2025; 13 Nov 2025)

7. Popular Information and House Oversight Committee publicized whistleblower claims of preferential treatment for Ghislaine Maxwell in

prison. Reports that Maxwell enjoyed special meals, unmonitored visits, and even a puppy in custody highlighted how elite inmates can receive gentler treatment, challenging narratives of equal justice. (10 Nov 2025; 13 Nov 2025)

8. Prison employees and Representative Jamie Raskin were involved in leaks of Ghislaine Maxwell's attorney-client emails to Congress. Staff leaking Maxwell's privileged emails to Raskin, and subsequent firings, raised complex questions about whistleblowing, privacy, and how information about high-profile inmates reaches lawmakers. (13 Nov 2025)

9. The Trump Administration and USDA issued conflicting directives and legal maneuvers over SNAP emergency payments. Rapid shifts between court orders, Supreme Court stays, and USDA memos on SNAP created confusion for states and beneficiaries, making it harder for the public to track who was responsible for lost aid. (8 Nov 2025; 9 Nov 2025; 12 Nov 2025)

10. The Trump Administration suspended the CDC's national flu vaccine campaign after taking office. Halting the CDC's "wild to mild" flu campaign during a severe season reduced authoritative public health messaging, leaving pediatricians to fill an information gap on vaccination. (11 Nov 2025)

11. The Trump Administration economic team acknowledged replacing empirical economic data with politically driven figures. An adviser's statement that the administration was "concocting" inflation and jobs numbers signaled deliberate manipulation of official statistics that citizens and markets rely on. (13 Nov 2025)

12. The Trump Administration and Justice Department allegedly investigated debunked 2020 Georgia election fraud claims. Reports that DOJ was pursuing long-discredited Georgia fraud narratives suggested federal law enforcement resources being used to validate election denial rather than protect voting rights. (14 Nov 2025)

13. Andrew Cuomo's mayoral campaign shared AI-generated videos depicting his opponent in racially charged ways. Cuomo's use of AI videos portraying Zohran Mamdani in stereotyped scenes showed how synthetic media can inject racism and Islamophobia into local elections while obscuring authorship. (13 Nov 2025)

14. Eric Adams's campaign used AI-generated robocalls and dystopian videos in the NYC mayoral race. Adams's deployment of AI robocalls and imagery to attack Mamdani highlighted how campaigns can scale persuasive messaging across languages with minimal transparency about manipulation. (13 Nov 2025)

15. President Donald Trump shared an AI-generated video of himself attacking protesters during No Kings demonstrations. Trump's promotion of an AI video showing him bombing Americans normalized fantastical, violent

imagery in political communication, further blurring lines between reality and spectacle. (13 Nov 2025)

16. President Donald Trump and legal team threatened a \$1bn defamation suit against the BBC over a January 6 documentary edit. Trump's legal threat against the BBC over a misleading edit, despite the network's acknowledgement, signaled a readiness to use massive lawsuits to intimidate investigative media. (11 Nov 2025)

17. Marion County, Kansas agreed to pay over \$3m and apologize for a police raid on a local newspaper. The county's settlement and apology for an unjustified raid on the Marion County Record acknowledged a serious violation of press freedom and may deter similar abuses. (11 Nov 2025)

18. The Trump Administration and FHFA Director Bill Pulte were implicated in efforts to access and potentially misuse mortgage records of political opponents. Investigations into whether a Trump ally accessed mortgage files of officials like Letitia James and Adam Schiff raised fears of financial data being weaponized against critics. (10 Nov 2025; 12 Nov 2025)

19. The Trump Administration and Justice Department provided outdated Epstein materials to Congress while estate documents showed more damning details. The contrast between DOJ's stale Epstein files and the estate's revealing emails suggested an attempt by the executive branch to sanitize the historical record of elite misconduct. (12 Nov 2025; 13 Nov 2025)

20. The Trump Administration and DHS labeled Sami Hamdi a terrorist sympathizer based on a politicized video. Branding Hamdi a terrorist sympathizer on the basis of a contested clip, without charges, showed how security labels can be used to delegitimize dissenting foreign voices. (14 Nov 2025)

21. The Trump Administration and USDA issued confusing SNAP guidance that forced states to reverse payments under threat. USDA's warnings that states could lose administrative funding or face liability for SNAP overpayments pressured them to claw back aid, using bureaucratic complexity to enforce austerity. (9 Nov 2025; 12 Nov 2025)

22. The Trump Administration and Justice Department aligned with election denial activists in Georgia, according to reports. Claims that DOJ was working with Georgia election deniers to revisit debunked fraud allegations suggested institutional validation of narratives that undermine confidence in legitimate elections. (14 Nov 2025)

23. The Trump Administration cut funding to museums and targeted Smithsonian content while resisting full Epstein file disclosure. Combined moves to defund museums, police Smithsonian narratives, and limit damaging Epstein disclosures showed a broader strategy of curating public memory to favor the regime. (11 Nov 2025; 13 Nov 2025)

24. The Trump Administration and economic advisers used chaotic overlapping crises and shifting narratives to fragment public focus. Simultaneous shutdown brinkmanship, SNAP reversals, mass pardons, aggressive raids, and conflicting international claims contributed to an environment where citizens struggle to track responsibility. (8 Nov 2025; 9 Nov 2025; 10 Nov 2025; 11 Nov 2025; 13 Nov 2025; 14 Nov 2025)



## CHAPTER 18

### **WEEK 44 (15 NOV 2025 – 20 NOV 2025): BELONGING REDRAWN BY FORCE**

*Immigration raids, anti-trans decrees, and secrecy fights hardened stratified citizenship while Congress and courts mounted partial, fragile checks on executive power.*

This week highlights an aggressive consolidation of executive power, including immigration crackdowns, anti-trans executive orders, and politicized law enforcement, all pointing toward a governing model that uses law as a weapon rather than a limit. Operation Charlotte's Web and related ICE/Border Patrol efforts exemplify federal attempts to intimidate disliked communities and oppose local authorities, directly eroding civil liberties and federalism. At the same time, a wide range of anti-trans policies—banning military service, removing data and documentation, restricting healthcare, housing, prisons, and education—formalizes a tiered citizenship system. The justice system leans toward revenge and impunity: politicized prosecutions (Comey), lenient settlements and pardons (Flynn, January 6 rioter, Charles Scott), and favoritism toward security-state interests within the FBI. Yet, Congress briefly asserts itself through nearly unanimous approval of the Epstein Files Transparency Act and a bipartisan effort to restore federal union rights, even as Trump and the DOJ work to block that transparency. Foreign and economic policies are deeply connected with crony capitalism and Saudi-linked self-dealings, while Trump increases rhetoric by calling for the execution of lawmakers and normalizing eliminationist language against political opponents.

## Power and Authority

1. Department of Homeland Security launched Operation Charlotte's Web in Charlotte after local non-cooperation. DHS initiated a large immigration sweep in Charlotte in response to local limits on detainer cooperation, testing federal leverage over sanctuary-style policies and raising concerns about unchecked executive enforcement power. (15 Nov 2025)

2. President Donald Trump directed Attorney General Pam Bondi to investigate named political opponents using Epstein materials. Trump's order to investigate specific Democratic figures over Epstein links used prosecutorial machinery against rivals, blurring the line between neutral law enforcement and personalized executive retribution. (15 Nov 2025)

3. President Donald Trump signed an executive order ending certain commodity tariffs to address prices. Trump's tariff rollback on key imports highlighted how unilateral trade powers can rapidly reshape economic conditions, underscoring the executive's central role in setting de facto tax and price policy. (15 Nov 2025)

4. President Donald Trump ordered a new investigation into the Jeffrey Epstein case. By reopening the Epstein probe while transparency votes loomed, Trump created an investigative pretext that could justify withholding records, using executive authority to shape what the public may learn about elite misconduct. (15 Nov 2025)

5. President Donald Trump pardoned white-collar offender Charles Scott after minimal jail time. The rapid pardon of a convicted fraudster raised concerns that clemency was being used to favor connected offenders, weakening deterrence and equal application of financial crime laws. (16 Nov 2025)

6. President Donald Trump publicly withdrew support from Marjorie Taylor Greene and criticized Thomas Massie over Epstein file votes. Trump's withdrawal of backing from GOP lawmakers who supported Epstein file disclosure signaled that party loyalty to his preferences could outweigh transparency and independent legislative judgment. (15 Nov 2025)

7. Texas Governor Greg Abbott designated CAIR and the Muslim Brotherhood as terrorist organizations under state law. Abbott's unilateral terror designations of a Muslim civil rights group and a foreign movement challenged federal primacy over terrorism lists and risked stigmatizing advocacy as security threats. (18 Nov 2025)

8. President Donald Trump confirmed intention to sell F-35 jets to Saudi Arabia despite security objections. Trump's commitment to advanced jet sales to Saudi Arabia over intelligence and ally concerns showed executive

discretion in arms transfers overriding traditional security caution and alliance management. (16 Nov 2025; 18 Nov 2025)

9. President Donald Trump designated Saudi Arabia a major non-NATO ally and announced large bilateral deals. Granting Saudi Arabia major non-NATO ally status alongside vast investment and arms deals deepened a strategic partnership where personal and national interests risked becoming intertwined. (18 Nov 2025)

10. President Donald Trump dismissed intelligence findings on Jamal Khashoggi's murder while praising Mohammed bin Salman. Trump's public rejection of U.S. intelligence on Khashoggi's killing in favor of Saudi narratives signaled willingness to sideline professional assessments for diplomatic and economic alignment with an authoritarian partner. (18 Nov 2025)

11. President Donald Trump met with Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman while his family pursued Saudi business deals. Trump's Oval Office meeting with MBS amid ongoing Trump Organization projects in Saudi Arabia highlighted blurred lines between U.S. foreign policy and the president's private financial interests. (15 Nov 2025; 18 Nov 2025)

12. President Donald Trump announced partial rollback of tariffs on Chinese imports through exemptions and deferrals. The administration's partial easing of China tariffs via complex exemptions showed how executive trade tools can be adjusted to manage political fallout while leaving disruptive policies largely intact. (20 Nov 2025)

13. President Donald Trump called for execution of Democratic lawmakers who urged troops to refuse unlawful orders. Trump's demand for executing opposition lawmakers for reminding troops of constitutional duties normalized eliminationist rhetoric against elected critics and threatened peaceful political competition. (19 Nov 2025)

14. President Donald Trump publicly threatened Democratic lawmakers with execution in response to their video on unlawful orders. Trump's repeated threats of execution against Democratic senators and representatives for constitutional messaging to the military further eroded norms protecting opposition figures from state-linked intimidation. (20 Nov 2025)

15. President Donald Trump implemented Liberation Day tariffs that raised costs on intermediate goods. The Liberation Day tariff package imposed broad levies on intermediate goods, disrupting production and jobs while illustrating how concentrated executive trade power can reshape economic structure without legislative debate. (20 Nov 2025)

16. President Donald Trump ignored economic advice warning against tariffs on intermediate goods. By disregarding expert warnings about taxing inputs, the administration highlighted how executive economic decisions can

sideline technocratic guidance, with downstream effects on growth and public welfare. (20 Nov 2025)

17. President Donald Trump oversaw tariff-driven conditions that pushed U.S. manufacturing toward recession-like levels. Tariff policies that contributed to prolonged weakness in manufacturing underscored how unilateral trade actions can function as structural economic governance tools with limited direct accountability. (20 Nov 2025)

## Institutions and Governance

1. House Oversight Committee received and reviewed Epstein estate documents showing texts with a member of Congress. Newly released Epstein estate records indicating real-time texting with a lawmaker during a 2019 hearing raised concerns about outside influence on congressional questioning and oversight integrity. (15 Nov 2025)

2. Salt Lake County District Attorney declined to charge Tim Ballard with sexual assault citing insufficient admissible evidence. The decision not to prosecute a prominent anti-trafficking figure despite multiple allegations highlighted tensions between evidentiary standards and public expectations of accountability for influential actors. (15 Nov 2025)

3. Department of Justice entered settlement talks over Michael Flynn's \$50 million claim after his suit was dismissed. DOJ's willingness to negotiate a large payout to Michael Flynn after failed litigation suggested that politically connected figures may secure favorable redress from the state unavailable to ordinary defendants. (15 Nov 2025)

4. House Ethics Committee reported that former Representative Matt Gaetz likely paid a minor for sex. The Ethics Committee's finding that a former member likely exploited a vulnerable teenager underscored both the capacity and limits of internal congressional mechanisms to address serious misconduct absent criminal charges. (17 Nov 2025)

5. Magistrate Judge William Fitzpatrick found government misconduct and ordered grand jury materials released in the Comey case. A federal judge's finding of serious prosecutorial missteps in the Comey indictment, including false legal instructions, highlighted judicial oversight as a check on politicized prosecutions. (16 Nov 2025; 17 Nov 2025)

6. Federal judiciary reprimanded Border Patrol official Gregory Bovino over attacks on peaceful protesters. A Chicago judge's rebuke of Border Patrol actions against protesters underscored courts' role in constraining federal enforcement when it infringes on civil rights. (16 Nov 2025)

7. House of Representatives voted overwhelmingly to pass the Epstein

Files Transparency Act mandating DOJ disclosure. The House's 427–1 vote to compel release of Epstein-related DOJ records marked a rare bipartisan assertion of transparency demands in a case involving powerful figures. (17 Nov 2025; 18 Nov 2025; 19 Nov 2025)

8. Representative Jared Golden and bipartisan co-sponsors secured enough signatures to force House action on restoring federal workers' union rights. A bipartisan discharge petition to repeal Trump-era limits on federal worker unions showed legislators using procedural tools to counter executive curbs on collective bargaining. (18 Nov 2025)

9. Indiana Senate leadership canceled a December redistricting meeting despite pressure from Trump and Governor Braun. Indiana Senate leaders' refusal to convene a redistricting session signaled intra-party resistance to externally driven gerrymandering plans, modestly reinforcing legislative autonomy. (18 Nov 2025)

10. President Donald Trump reversed position and urged House Republicans to support releasing Epstein FBI files. Trump's late endorsement of Epstein file disclosure, after earlier resistance, illustrated how executive messaging can shift under intra-party and public pressure on transparency issues. (16 Nov 2025; 18 Nov 2025)

11. United States Senate approved the Epstein files release bill by unanimous consent. The Senate's unanimous consent to the Epstein transparency bill reinforced cross-party agreement that public access to these records is necessary for accountability. (18 Nov 2025; 19 Nov 2025)

12. President Donald Trump signed legislation compelling DOJ to release Epstein investigation files within 30 days. By signing the Epstein files law, Trump formally bound DOJ to disclose sensitive records despite his own political exposure, strengthening statutory transparency requirements. (19 Nov 2025)

13. House of Representatives transmitted the Epstein files resolution to the Senate and then the president. Formal transmission of the Epstein disclosure measure advanced a rare, coordinated legislative push to pierce secrecy around elite-linked crimes. (19 Nov 2025)

14. House of Representatives voted unanimously to repeal a Senate provision granting senators taxpayer-funded damages. The House's unanimous repeal of a self-serving Senate damages clause signaled institutional self-correction against perceived misuse of public funds for lawmakers' benefit. (19 Nov 2025)

15. Congress considered a 2026 military budget approaching \$1.045 trillion. Deliberations over a near-\$1 trillion defense budget highlighted how legislative choices can entrench a war-focused fiscal structure and channel

vast resources to military contractors. (19 Nov 2025)

16. House Republicans failed in an attempt to censure Delegate Stacey Plaskett over Epstein-related texts. The defeat of a censure resolution targeting Stacey Plaskett, followed by withdrawal of a reciprocal censure, underscored how ethics tools can be wielded and bargained as partisan weapons rather than neutral accountability mechanisms. (19 Nov 2025)

17. San Diego City Council advanced an ordinance requiring warrants for federal access to non-public city facilities. San Diego's move to require warrants for federal agents entering non-public city spaces asserted local control and due process safeguards against unreviewed federal enforcement activity. (19 Nov 2025)

18. Federal prosecutors in the Comey case admitted omissions and irregularities in presenting a revised indictment to the grand jury. Prosecutors' acknowledgment that a revised Comey indictment was not properly presented to the full grand jury exposed procedural violations that undermined confidence in high-profile prosecutions. (19 Nov 2025)

19. Lindsey Halligan as interim U.S. Attorney submitted a grand jury indictment against James Comey that the full grand jury had not voted on. Halligan's filing of an indictment lacking proper grand jury approval represented a rare breach of constitutional charging procedures, raising alarms about politicized shortcuts in federal prosecutions. (20 Nov 2025)

20. House Oversight Ranking Member Robert Garcia warned DOJ against destroying or withholding Epstein-related records. Garcia's warning to DOJ underscored congressional concern that the executive might evade a new transparency law by destroying or concealing sensitive Epstein documents. (19 Nov 2025)

21. President Donald Trump and Attorney General Pam Bondi sought to withhold Epstein files despite a disclosure law by invoking national security and ongoing investigations. Efforts to delay or narrow Epstein file releases using broad exemptions challenged the force of a bipartisan transparency statute and suggested continued shielding of elite networks. (20 Nov 2025)

22. Federal Emergency Management Agency leadership saw acting administrator David Richardson resign amid plans to shrink FEMA. The resignation of FEMA's acting head during a push to downsize the agency after deadly flooding raised concerns about political willingness to weaken core disaster-response capacity. (17 Nov 2025)

23. Zohran Mamdani, mayor-elect of New York City appointed Lina Khan to his transition team to scrutinize private equity practices. Bringing a former antitrust chair onto New York's transition team signaled an intent to use

municipal governance to check concentrated financial power in key local sectors. (15 Nov 2025)

24. Zohran Mamdani, mayor-elect of New York City announced Jessica Tisch would remain as NYPD commissioner. Mamdani's decision to retain the existing police commissioner balanced continuity in crime reduction with his reform agenda, shaping how New York's largest law enforcement institution will be overseen. (19 Nov 2025)

25. Federal Communications Commission scheduled an open commission meeting to address spectrum, relay services, and cybersecurity. The FCC's public meeting on spectrum reconfiguration and cybersecurity reflected ongoing rulemaking that shapes the infrastructure of communications and access to digital services. (19 Nov 2025)

26. Federal Communications Commission sought comment on confidential information collection procedures under delegated authority. An FCC notice on handling confidential information under the Paperwork Reduction Act affected how regulated entities report sensitive data, balancing transparency with privacy and administrative burden. (17 Nov 2025)

27. Federal Communications Commission requested comment on information collection for incarcerated people's communications services. The FCC's review of data needs for regulating prison phone services influenced oversight of pricing and access for incarcerated people's communications with the outside world. (17 Nov 2025)

28. Environmental Protection Agency issued multiple air quality and hazardous waste State Implementation Plan approvals and redesignations. EPA approvals for various state air and waste programs in states like Arizona, Kansas, Montana, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Vermont, Arkansas, Alaska, Utah, and others adjusted the balance of federal and state responsibility for environmental enforcement. (17 Nov 2025; 18 Nov 2025; 19 Nov 2025)

29. Environmental Protection Agency announced or renewed multiple information collection requests for environmental and worker protection programs. EPA's suite of ICR renewals for oil spill planning, agricultural worker protection, pesticide applicator certification, hazardous releases, and industrial standards maintained data flows that underpin regulatory enforcement. (17 Nov 2025; 18 Nov 2025; 19 Nov 2025)

30. Food and Drug Administration issued multiple guidance documents on medical products, devices, and drug access. FDA guidance on menstrual products, device quality systems, pH adjuster waivers, investigational drug access, and patient-focused outcome assessments refined regulatory expectations that shape safety, innovation, and patient rights. (17 Nov 2025; 18 Nov 2025)

31. Occupational Safety and Health Administration proposed expanding recognition of a Nationally Recognized Testing Laboratory. OSHA's preliminary approval to expand a testing lab's recognition affected how product safety is certified, influencing workplace and consumer protections. (18 Nov 2025)

32. Environmental Protection Agency issued multiple pesticide tolerance and registration decisions. EPA's actions on pesticide tolerances, exemptions, and new uses for substances like fluazinam, chlorantraniliprole, castor oil polymers, oxirane polymers, fragrance components, sedaxane, and fluopyram shaped agricultural practices and food safety standards. (17 Nov 2025; 18 Nov 2025)

33. Environmental Protection Agency submitted several industrial air pollution information collection renewals to OMB. EPA's renewal submissions for NSPS and NESHAP reporting in sectors like metal fabrication, ammonium sulfate, steel pickling, and oil and gas ensured continued monitoring of industrial emissions. (18 Nov 2025)

34. Abraham Lincoln delivered the Gettysburg Address emphasizing democratic governance. Lincoln's Gettysburg Address, recalled this week, articulated a vision of government rooted in popular sovereignty and equality that continues to serve as a benchmark for evaluating U.S. democratic practice. (19 Nov 2025)

## Civil Rights and Dissent

1. U.S. Customs and Border Protection and Border Patrol agents conducted large-scale immigration raids in Charlotte under Operation Charlotte's Web. Aggressive raids that detained scores of people, including citizens, near homes, churches, and businesses deepened fears of racial profiling and due process violations in immigrant communities. (16 Nov 2025; 17 Nov 2025; 18 Nov 2025)

2. Local residents and activists in Charlotte organized protests against federal immigration operations. Hundreds of Charlotte residents protesting Border Patrol tactics demonstrated community pushback against perceived abusive enforcement and the exercise of assembly rights under federal pressure. (16 Nov 2025)

3. Department of Homeland Security officers in Charlotte arrested protesters outside a DHS office during demonstrations. The arrest of two protesters outside a DHS facility highlighted how immigration crackdowns can spill over into constraints on peaceful dissent and public criticism. (16 Nov 2025)

4. U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement and Border Patrol deployed agents to the Raleigh–Durham area, prompting community defense efforts. Expanded ICE and Border Patrol presence in North Carolina suburbs spurred local groups to organize witness teams and hotlines, reflecting grassroots responses to perceived intimidation of immigrant families. (17 Nov 2025)

5. Federal immigration officials wrongfully deported transgender woman Britania Uriostegui Rios to Mexico despite a court order. The deportation of a trans woman to a country where she faced torture, in defiance of a judicial order, exposed grave risks to bodily security and rule-of-law protections for vulnerable migrants. (18 Nov 2025)

6. Transgender U.S. Air Force members filed a lawsuit challenging denial of early retirement pensions and benefits. Seventeen transgender airmen sued over revoked retirement benefits, arguing unlawful discrimination that jeopardized their families' economic security and equal treatment in military service. (16 Nov 2025)

7. Workers at Rubicon landscape company sued former Utah Attorney General Sean Reyes over a televised human-trafficking raid. Rubicon employees' lawsuit alleging a politically motivated, factually baseless raid highlighted how law enforcement theatrics can devastate livelihoods and chill worker rights. (18 Nov 2025)

8. ICE detainees in California filed a class action lawsuit over denial of necessary medical care after VA contract termination. Detainees' class action describing loss of critical treatments like insulin and chemotherapy underscored how administrative decisions can endanger the health and basic rights of people in custody. (18 Nov 2025)

9. Department of Veterans Affairs abruptly terminated its agreement to provide medical care for ICE detainees. VA's sudden withdrawal from detainee medical care, leaving ICE scrambling for no-bid replacements, created a health crisis that disproportionately harmed noncitizens with little political voice. (18 Nov 2025)

10. Center to Advance Security in America sued the VA for failing to respond to a FOIA request on detainee medical claims processing. CASA's FOIA lawsuit over VA's opaque role in detainee healthcare highlighted transparency gaps around policies affecting the rights and welfare of detained migrants. (18 Nov 2025)

11. Indiana State Senator Greg Goode was targeted in a swatting attack after opposing gerrymandering efforts. A swatting incident against a state senator following Trump's criticism illustrated how political rhetoric can be

followed by dangerous harassment of officials who resist partisan redistricting. (17 Nov 2025)

12. Epstein survivors and supportive lawmakers held a press conference demanding release of Epstein files and criticizing politicization. Survivors' public advocacy for full Epstein disclosure emphasized civil society's role in pressing institutions to confront elite abuse and resist partisan manipulation of justice. (18 Nov 2025)

13. The Removal Coalition and allied activists organized a large-scale mobilization in Washington, D.C. calling for accountability. Plans for a multi-day protest in the capital signaled ongoing grassroots efforts to use mass assembly to demand transparency and democratic accountability from national leaders. (20 Nov 2025)

14. Federal and state authorities deployed National Guard troops in U.S. cities without local consent. National Guard deployments to cities like Portland and Chicago over local objections blurred lines between military and civilian policing, raising fears of politicized domestic force. (17 Nov 2025)

15. The Trump Administration and Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth fired several senior military officers including the chair of the Joint Chiefs. The removal of top military leaders as part of a broader downsizing effort raised concerns that high command positions were being reshaped for political alignment rather than professional criteria. (17 Nov 2025)

16. Six former service secretaries and retired four-star officers issued a report warning against politicization of the U.S. military. A report by former senior defense officials urged Congress to scrutinize domestic deployments and senior firings, emphasizing the need to preserve the military's apolitical character. (17 Nov 2025)

17. FBI Director Kash Patel waived polygraph exams for senior staff and assigned a security detail to his girlfriend. By relaxing vetting for top aides and diverting tactical resources to protect a personal partner, FBI leadership appeared to prioritize loyalty and private interests over neutral security protocols. (15 Nov 2025; 16 Nov 2025)

18. Federal grand jury in Maryland investigated whether FHFA Director Bill Pulte and a DOJ prosecutor misused mortgage fraud probes against Trump critics. A grand jury inquiry into alleged targeting of political opponents through mortgage investigations highlighted risks of law enforcement tools being turned against dissenting officials. (19 Nov 2025)

19. FBI employee David Maltinsky filed a wrongful termination lawsuit over being fired for displaying a Pride flag. Maltinsky's suit alleging unconstitutional retaliation for a Pride flag display raised questions about viewpoint

discrimination and LGBTQ+ expression inside a key federal law enforcement agency. (19 Nov 2025)

20. January 6 participant Andrew Paul Johnson was arrested on child sexual abuse charges after receiving a Trump pardon. The arrest of a pardoned January 6 rioter on serious new charges reignited debate over the judgment and accountability implications of clemency for politically aligned offenders. (19 Nov 2025)

21. Tom Steyer announced his candidacy for governor of California with reform-oriented proposals. Steyer's entry into the California governor's race, emphasizing affordability and campaign finance limits, added a high-profile voice to debates over economic and democratic reforms in a major state. (19 Nov 2025)

22. Marist pollsters reported Democrats leading Republicans by 14 points on the 2026 generic ballot. Polling showing a sizable Democratic advantage suggested public discontent with current governance, potentially reshaping incentives for parties' approaches to rights and institutions. (19 Nov 2025)

23. State legislatures across more than twenty-five states enacted bans on youth gender-affirming care following a Supreme Court ruling. A wave of state laws restricting gender-affirming care for minors, encouraged by federal signals, entrenched a patchwork of rights that sharply curtailed medical autonomy for transgender youth. (20 Nov 2025)

24. President Donald Trump and Attorney General Pam Bondi used an investigation into Democrats' Epstein links to justify limiting file releases. Launching a targeted Epstein investigation into named Democrats created a basis to claim "ongoing case" exemptions, intertwining partisan aims with constraints on public access to information. (18 Nov 2025)

## Economic Structure

1. City of Chicago settled a lawsuit with DoorDash for \$18 million over pandemic-era practices. Chicago's settlement with DoorDash for listing restaurants without consent and inflating prices demonstrated local governments' role in checking exploitative platform behavior affecting small businesses and consumers. (15 Nov 2025)

2. Government of China launched an anti-involution campaign to curb excessive corporate competition. China's campaign to restrain cutthroat competition and stabilize prices showed a highly interventionist state reshaping market dynamics, with implications for employment and private enterprise autonomy. (15 Nov 2025)

3. Government of China experienced a decline in fixed-asset investment

amid broader economic slowdown. Falling fixed-asset investment in China signaled structural economic stress that could affect social stability and the state's capacity to deliver growth-based legitimacy. (15 Nov 2025)

4. Local governments in China provided financial support to struggling electric vehicle companies. Local bailouts of distressed EV firms illustrated how public funds are used to sustain strategic industries and jobs, potentially entrenching state-dependent corporate structures. (15 Nov 2025)

5. Government of China continued efforts to stabilize a declining real estate market. Persistent declines in Chinese home prices despite state interventions underscored systemic risks in a sector central to household wealth and local government finance. (15 Nov 2025)

6. Trump Organization and Dar Global announced plans for a tokenized luxury resort in the Maldives. The planned tokenized resort project showcased how emerging financial technologies can be used in high-end real estate, raising questions about regulatory oversight and access. (16 Nov 2025)

7. U.S. Department of Agriculture leadership blamed former President Biden for potential beef price spikes despite contrary evidence. Agriculture officials' efforts to pin beef price issues on a prior administration, contrary to industry data, reflected politicized narratives around economic performance. (17 Nov 2025)

8. The Trump Administration economic advisers promoted a narrative of a strong job market despite indicators of strain. Officials' rosy portrayal of a "Golden Age" economy amid inflation and tariff-driven costs illustrated how economic messaging can diverge from underlying data, shaping public perceptions. (17 Nov 2025)

9. Senator Ron Wyden and Senate Finance Committee staff called for investigation into JPMorgan Chase over Epstein-related suspicious transactions. A Senate report urging scrutiny of JPMorgan's handling of over \$1 billion in suspicious Epstein-linked transfers highlighted concerns about big banks' compliance with anti-money laundering duties. (19 Nov 2025)

10. Major U.S. arms contractors positioned to receive over a quarter of Pentagon contract dollars in 2026. Projected concentration of defense contracts among a few firms, alongside large shareholder payouts, underscored how public military spending can reinforce corporate power and investor gains. (19 Nov 2025)

11. Popular Info analysis of Pentagon contracting highlighted how defense contractors used public funds for stock buybacks and dividends. Findings that major arms firms financed extensive shareholder returns from government revenue illustrated how war-related spending can be monetized by corporate insiders. (19 Nov 2025)

12. Economic analysts argued government could ease housing burdens on young people through zoning reform. Commentary that restrictive zoning and building rules favor older property owners over younger renters framed housing policy as a key lever for intergenerational economic fairness. (18 Nov 2025)

13. Economic commentators criticized the Trump administration for ignoring consensus advice against intermediate-good tariffs. Analysts' critiques that the administration disregarded well-known harms of taxing inputs highlighted how policy can be driven by political calculus over economic expertise. (20 Nov 2025)

14. Economic data agencies reported rising unemployment and inflation under current trade policies. New figures showing higher unemployment and inflation, especially in goods-producing sectors, underscored the real-world costs of tariff-heavy strategies on workers and households. (20 Nov 2025)

15. Defense and industrial policy analysts urged the U.S. to improve industrial policy for drone production. Calls for better industrial policy and tariff relief for allies to scale drone manufacturing framed economic coordination as central to future military competitiveness. (20 Nov 2025)

## Information, Memory, and Manipulation

1. Donald Trump announced plans to sue the BBC for up to \$5 billion over a past edit. Trump's threat of a multibillion-dollar lawsuit against the BBC, despite its apology, signaled the use of legal intimidation against media outlets that produced critical coverage. (15 Nov 2025)

2. Donald Trump and FCC Commissioner Brendan Carr attacked NBC host Seth Meyers and amplified calls for his firing. Trump's denunciation of a late-night host, echoed by an FCC commissioner, raised concerns that regulatory figures might be used to pressure or punish disfavored media voices. (15 Nov 2025)

3. Government of China cracked down on social media content deemed excessively pessimistic. China's suppression of "pessimistic" posts illustrated state efforts to manage public mood and narrative online, limiting space for criticism and independent information. (15 Nov 2025)

4. Department of Homeland Security under Secretary Kristi Noem ran a \$220 million anti-immigration ad campaign with a large no-bid contract to a politically linked firm. A massive DHS ad buy routed largely to a Delaware company tied to GOP operatives blurred lines between public information campaigns and partisan messaging funded by taxpayers. (15 Nov 2025)

5. House Oversight Committee released over 20,000 documents from

Jeffrey Epstein's estate. The committee's publication of extensive Epstein records shed light on elite networks that sought his access, expanding the documentary record available for public scrutiny. (16 Nov 2025)

6. State Department moved to suspend 38 universities from the Diplomacy Lab program over DEI hiring. Threatening to cut universities from a research partnership for using DEI criteria pressured academic institutions to align hiring practices with federal ideological preferences. (19 Nov 2025)

7. President Donald Trump criticized female reporters and suggested ABC News should lose its license. Trump's attack on specific reporters and hints at license revocation for ABC signaled a willingness to threaten regulatory consequences for aggressive journalism about his foreign and business ties. (18 Nov 2025)

8. Chinese government and military planners leveraged social media technologies for warfighting and internal cohesion. China's integration of social media control into war planning highlighted how information systems can be weaponized to maintain domestic unity and shape conflict narratives. (20 Nov 2025)

9. Economic advisers Kevin Hassett and others promoted misleading claims about a strong economy despite contrary indicators. Administration figures' upbeat economic messaging, at odds with inflation and job losses, contributed to an information environment where voters may misjudge policy performance. (17 Nov 2025)

10. Agriculture Secretary Brooke Rollins falsely blamed former President Biden for beef price spikes. Rollins' attempt to shift responsibility for beef prices onto a prior administration, despite industry disagreement, exemplified partisan economic disinformation. (17 Nov 2025)

11. President Donald Trump and Attorney General Pam Bondi cited national security and an active investigation to delay Epstein file releases. Invoking broad secrecy claims to slow-walk a mandated document release risked turning security rationales into tools for shielding politically sensitive information from the public record. (20 Nov 2025)

12. Executive branch under President Donald Trump implemented Executive Order 14168 rolling back federal recognition and data protections for transgender people. EO 14168's removal of X gender markers, denial of updates, and passport revocations redefined official identity categories, narrowing recognition and privacy for transgender individuals. (20 Nov 2025)

13. Executive branch agencies implementing EO 14168 deleted LGBTQ health pages, suicide-risk data, and trans-related terminology from federal records. The erasure of LGBTQ-related health content and terminology from

federal sites and surveys undermined evidence-based policymaking and obscured the needs of a targeted population. (20 Nov 2025)

14. The Trump Administration education and defense officials ordered removal of LGBTQ- and race-related books from federal military-base schools. Directives stripping inclusive materials from base schools and discouraging accurate names and pronouns narrowed the range of perspectives available in official educational settings. (20 Nov 2025)

15. The Trump Administration health officials ended the dedicated 988 crisis line option for LGBTQ youth. Cutting the specialized “Press 3” lifeline for LGBTQ youth removed a tailored support channel amid high suicide risk, weakening targeted public health communication. (20 Nov 2025)

16. The Trump Administration communications and surrogates used optimistic rhetoric to downplay tariff-driven economic harms. Continued promotion of a strong-economy narrative despite tariff-linked job losses and inflation contributed to a dissonant information environment around economic policy. (20 Nov 2025)

17. Chinese state and industrial planners built dominance across the drone manufacturing supply chain. China’s comprehensive control of drone production capacity underscored how industrial policy and manufacturing data can be leveraged for strategic advantage in future conflicts. (20 Nov 2025)

18. House of Representatives and Senate passed and sent to the president a law mandating release of Epstein files with limited redactions. Congress’s requirement that DOJ release Epstein records, barring redactions for embarrassment, aimed to prevent political sanitization of the historical record on elite abuse. (18 Nov 2025; 19 Nov 2025)

19. House Oversight Democrats and allied commentators warned that simultaneous crises and threats were fragmenting public focus. Observers noted that overlapping tariff shocks, anti-trans orders, and incendiary rhetoric around Epstein files risked overwhelming public attention, complicating sustained accountability. (20 Nov 2025)



## **CHAPTER 19**

### **WEEK 45 (22 NOV 2025 – 28 NOV 2025): LAW AS SORTING MECHANISM**

*A week of static clock hands but deepening habits, as law, borders, and information are used to decide who counts and who may speak.*

This was an exceptionally intense week for structural democratic erosion, with increasing pressures on the rule of law, civil-military norms, immigration-based citizenship stratification, and foreign-policy influence. The Trump administration's actions with the Justice Department and military stand out: politicized prosecutions and purges at DOJ, wide-ranging election-related pardons, threats of military tribunals for opponents, and OLC justifications for lethal force and boat strikes without Congressional approval. Immigration policy is being weaponized as a key authoritarian tool—TPS terminations, reviews of refugee and green-card processes, child detentions, and threats to de-naturalize citizens reinforce stratified citizenship and normalize law as a weapon. Internationally, the Ukraine “peace” plan, engagement with Russian officials, deference to Xi on Taiwan, and Venezuela’s posture show foreign influence welcomed when it benefits regime interests and indicate a shift away from liberal-democratic alliances. Systemic information manipulation includes the cancellation of GDP data, distortion of CDC science, false leaks about Ukraine deals, and threats to media licenses. Counterbalancing forces—federal courts sanctioning Trump, blocking Texas maps, protecting due process, and ordering transparency in the Epstein files—offer some notable but modest efforts to repair democracy.

## Power and Authority

1. President Trump called for the arrest and possible execution of Democratic lawmakers over a video. Trump's demand that veteran lawmakers be arrested and suggesting their conduct was punishable by death used presidential rhetoric to criminalize opposition, chilling legislative dissent and normalizing threats of extreme punishment for political speech. (23 Nov 2025)

2. President Trump issued an executive order designating certain Muslim Brotherhood chapters as foreign terrorist organizations. By unilaterally labeling specific Muslim Brotherhood chapters as terrorist groups, Trump expanded executive security powers in ways that can reshape foreign policy and potentially justify broad surveillance or sanctions with limited legislative oversight. (24 Nov 2025)

3. President Trump ordered a review and potential termination of TPS and refugee protections for several groups. Trump's directives to reevaluate Somali TPS, end TPS for Myanmar nationals, and review Biden-era refugees concentrated power over legal status in the executive, making residency for vulnerable groups contingent on shifting political priorities. (23 Nov 2025; 24 Nov 2025; 25 Nov 2025)

4. President Trump met with New York City mayor-elect Zohran Mamdani after previously threatening to withhold funds. Trump's cordial Oval Office meeting with Mamdani, following earlier threats to cut funds if he were elected, illustrated how federal resources can be used as leverage over local officials and then withdrawn for strategic political repositioning. (24 Nov 2025)

5. President Trump announced a national Genesis Mission to accelerate federal AI development. The Genesis Mission centralized federal AI initiatives and data under executive direction, expanding presidential influence over strategic technology that can shape economic power, security tools, and information systems with limited external checks. (24 Nov 2025)

6. President Trump issued a broad pardon potentially covering 2020 election-related voter fraud. A sweeping pardon that may shield many 2020 election fraud actors used unilateral clemency to undercut accountability for attacks on electoral integrity, signaling that loyalty to the regime can outweigh adherence to election law. (25 Nov 2025)

7. President Trump used taxpayer-funded travel and pressure on companies for personal and political aims. Reports that Trump leveraged publicly funded travel and presidential influence to pressure private firms blurred the line between public duty and personal or partisan gain, weakening norms against self-dealing in executive conduct. (25 Nov 2025)

8. President Trump threatened to cancel or invalidate Biden-era executive orders signed by autopen. Trump's declaration that he would void many Biden executive orders on dubious autopen grounds challenged continuity of lawful executive actions and suggested a willingness to rewrite legal baselines based on partisan narratives. (27 Nov 2025; 28 Nov 2025)

9. President Trump expanded executive power through numerous 2025 orders challenging other institutions. A year-long pattern of aggressive executive orders that sidelined Congress, pressured agencies, and tested judicial limits entrenched a presidency that treats legal and institutional constraints as negotiable obstacles rather than binding rules. (27 Nov 2025)

10. President Trump signed an executive order declaring a National Day of Remembrance for Charlie Kirk. By elevating Charlie Kirk's killing into a national remembrance framed as the work of the "radical left," Trump used symbolic executive power to harden partisan narratives around political violence and stigmatize ideological opponents. (28 Nov 2025)

11. President Trump ordered a Michigan coal plant to remain open under a national energy emergency. Invoking emergency authority to force continued operation of a costly, polluting coal plant over state objections showed how emergency framing can be used to override local decisions and shift large financial and environmental burdens onto the public. (28 Nov 2025)

12. President Trump announced a pardon for imprisoned former Honduran president Juan Orlando Hernández. Trump's plan to pardon a foreign leader convicted of major drug and weapons offenses signaled that executive clemency could be extended to powerful allies abroad, weakening deterrence and complicating international anti-corruption efforts. (28 Nov 2025)

13. President Trump threatened to de-naturalize immigrants deemed incompatible with Western civilization. Trump's threat to strip citizenship from naturalized Americans based on culture or origin undermined the security of citizenship itself, suggesting that legal status can be revoked for ideological or ethnic reasons rather than lawful cause. (28 Nov 2025)

## **Institutions and Governance**

1. House Democrats released emails implicating Trump in knowledge of Jeffrey Epstein's abuse. By publishing emails suggesting Trump knew of Epstein's exploitation of underage girls, House Democrats used congressional transparency tools to expose potential elite wrongdoing despite intra-party resistance and pressure from Trump. (22 Nov 2025)

2. Federal appeals court blocked expansion of rapid deportation policy lacking due process. The appeals court's decision to halt a fast-track deportation expansion reaffirmed judicial willingness to enforce due process limits on executive immigration enforcement, protecting noncitizens from summary removal without adequate review. (22 Nov 2025)

3. Department of Justice recruited legal experts to serve as specialized deportation judges. DOJ's effort to hire lawyers as dedicated deportation judges signaled a structural expansion of the immigration adjudication apparatus, potentially tilting the quasi-judicial system toward faster removals at the expense of individualized review. (22 Nov 2025)

4. Federal judge Cameron McGowan Currie dismissed indictments against James Comey and Letitia James over an unlawful prosecutor appointment. Currie's ruling that interim U.S. attorney Lindsey Halligan was illegally appointed voided high-profile prosecutions of Trump critics, reinforcing that valid appointments are a prerequisite for legitimate criminal cases. (23 Nov 2025; 24 Nov 2025; 25 Nov 2025)

5. Lindsey Halligan and the Trump Justice Department indicted former FBI director James Comey in a politically charged case. The Comey indictment, driven by a novice Trump appointee under presidential pressure, exemplified the use of prosecutorial power to pursue perceived enemies, prompting resignations that weakened DOJ's capacity in complex cases. (24 Nov 2025)

6. North Dakota Supreme Court reinstated a felony abortion ban with narrow exceptions. By reviving a strict abortion ban despite concerns over vague exceptions, the state's high court curtailed reproductive autonomy and left providers facing criminal penalties under an ambiguously drafted statute. (24 Nov 2025)

7. US Department of Justice renewed its request to unseal Jeffrey Epstein grand jury materials. DOJ's renewed push to unseal Epstein grand jury records, following new statutory authority, aimed to increase transparency in a major abuse case while balancing victim privacy and ongoing investigative interests. (24 Nov 2025)

8. Department of Justice leadership allowed mass departures and reorientation of DOJ toward partisan priorities. The exodus of thousands of DOJ staff, gutting civil rights and public integrity units while redirecting resources to MAGA-aligned agendas, hollowed out neutral enforcement capacity and entrenched partisan control over federal law enforcement. (24 Nov 2025)

9. Department of Justice shrunk its public integrity section to two lawyers. Reducing DOJ's public integrity section to a token staff after dropping major

corruption cases signaled a retreat from serious federal oversight of political corruption, increasing impunity for powerful officials. (24 Nov 2025)

10. Department of Justice shifted voting rights enforcement to align with Trump's electoral agenda. DOJ's voting section, now understaffed and backing GOP-favoring maps while opposing Democratic ones, repurposed federal voting enforcement to serve partisan mapmaking rather than neutral protection of equal representation. (24 Nov 2025)

11. Federal judge ordered DOJ to expedite FOIA processing on Epstein-related records. A court order compelling faster FOIA responses on Epstein files strengthened public access to information about government handling of elite abuse cases, countering bureaucratic delay. (24 Nov 2025)

12. US State Department designated Venezuela-linked Cartel de los Soles as a terrorist organization. Labeling Cartel de los Soles a terrorist group expanded legal tools for action against Venezuela but also risked stretching terrorism designations to justify broader geopolitical pressure without clear evidentiary standards. (24 Nov 2025)

13. Georgia prosecutors and courts dismissed the 2020 election racketeering case against Trump and allies. The final dismissal of Georgia's 2020 election interference case, following DA disqualification and legal complications, removed a key avenue for holding a former president accountable for attempts to overturn certified results. (26 Nov 2025)

14. US Department of Justice defended continued deportation flights to El Salvador despite a judge's order. DOJ's filing arguing that DHS lawfully continued deportation flights contrary to a federal judge's directive highlighted executive willingness to interpret court orders narrowly, testing judicial authority over immigration enforcement. (26 Nov 2025)

15. Florida Supreme Court ruled that Marsy's Law does not automatically shield police officers' identities. Florida's high court limited officers' use of victim-protection laws to hide their names after fatal incidents, reinforcing transparency and public oversight of police use of force. (26 Nov 2025)

16. Ohio Supreme Court issued mixed rulings on police anonymity under Marsy's Law. Ohio's decisions allowing anonymity in one shooting case while rejecting it in another underscored ongoing judicial struggle over balancing officer safety with public transparency in police violence cases. (26 Nov 2025)

17. Federal court blocked Texas's mid-decade congressional redistricting plan. A federal court's decision to halt Texas's attempt to add several GOP-leaning districts checked a partisan redistricting push that could have skewed representation, pending Supreme Court review. (26 Nov 2025)

18. 11th Circuit Court of Appeals upheld nearly \$1 million in sanctions

against Trump and his lawyer for a frivolous lawsuit. The 11th Circuit's affirmation of heavy sanctions for Trump's conspiracy-laden RICO suit against political rivals signaled judicial intolerance for abusing courts as tools of political harassment. (26 Nov 2025)

19. Rep. Eric Swalwell sued FHFA Director Bill Pulte for alleged abuse of access to mortgage records. Swalwell's lawsuit accusing the FHFA director of weaponizing confidential mortgage data against Trump opponents highlighted concerns about independent agencies being used to gather dirt on political adversaries. (25 Nov 2025)

20. Coalition of states and DC sued the Trump administration over HUD homelessness program changes. Twenty states and DC challenged HUD rule changes that would cut homelessness support and burden trans and nonbinary people, using litigation to defend vulnerable groups against ideologically driven federal policy shifts. (25 Nov 2025)

21. Chicago faith leaders filed a First Amendment lawsuit over clergy access to detained immigrants. Faith leaders' suit alleging DHS blocked religious access to detainees framed immigration enforcement as not only a civil liberties issue but also a test of constitutional protections for religious practice in carceral settings. (28 Nov 2025)

22. Federal courts and regulators handled multiple routine regulatory notices and public comment processes. EPA, FDA, FCC, TSA, DEA, and other agencies issued numerous notices on air quality, medical devices, controlled substances, and information collections, reflecting ongoing technocratic governance and public participation channels amid broader politicization. (24 Nov 2025; 25 Nov 2025; 26 Nov 2025; 28 Nov 2025)

## Civil Rights and Dissent

1. Masked Border Patrol agents conducted street operations in North Carolina that terrified residents. Border Patrol's masked street snatches in North Carolina, which kept children from school and people from leaving home, used immigration enforcement tactics that effectively suppressed free movement and civic participation in targeted communities. (22 Nov 2025)

2. ICE agents in Oregon detained a US citizen high school student and sought charges after release. ICE's detention of citizen Christian Jimenez and subsequent attempt to charge him for obstruction highlighted the risk of wrongful immigration enforcement against citizens and the chilling effect on immigrant communities' trust in authorities. (23 Nov 2025)

3. ICE and DHS conducted a raid on a South Korean-owned factory, straining US-Korea relations. An ICE raid apparently driven by arrest quotas

rather than strategy led to diplomatic fallout with South Korea, showing how aggressive enforcement can damage both immigrant rights and foreign partnerships. (23 Nov 2025)

4. President Trump called for the release of convicted election official Tina Peters. Trump's demand to free Tina Peters, convicted for breaching election equipment, undermined respect for lawful penalties against election interference and signaled support for those who subvert voting systems in his favor. (23 Nov 2025)

5. Six Democratic veteran lawmakers released a video urging service members to refuse unlawful orders. The lawmakers' public reminder that troops must disobey illegal orders asserted civilian oversight and legal constraints on the military, provoking an aggressive response from the administration. (23 Nov 2025)

6. ICE increased detention of immigrant children separated from families. A surge in ICE detentions of children, often after traffic stops separating them from parents, intensified humanitarian concerns and used family separation as a tool of immigration control. (24 Nov 2025)

7. FBI counterterrorism division and Trump administration investigated and allegedly used the FBI to intimidate Democratic lawmakers over their video. Launching a counterterrorism probe into six members of Congress for a video on unlawful orders, and contacting Hill security for interviews, weaponized federal law enforcement against elected critics. (24 Nov 2025; 25 Nov 2025)

8. Tennessee Secretary of State Tre Hargett ordered public libraries to review and remove LGBTQ-themed books. Hargett's directive to purge LGBTQ-related materials from 181 libraries under anti-DEI and "gender ideology" rules imposed viewpoint-based censorship on public collections, restricting access to information for queer communities and allies. (25 Nov 2025)

9. ICE and DHS detained Maher Tarabishi, a longtime caregiver father, as a supposed terrorist. Detaining a 62-year-old caregiver with no criminal record as a "criminal alien" and alleged terrorist, leaving his disabled son without support, illustrated how expansive enforcement can disregard humanitarian considerations and due process. (27 Nov 2025)

10. USCIS and DHS expanded reviews of asylum cases, green cards, and Afghan residency applications. Orders to re-examine asylum claims, green cards, and halt Afghan residency processing tightened immigration controls in ways that could destabilize lawful status for many, especially those who aided US forces. (27 Nov 2025)

II. The Trump Administration granted asylum to Rahmanullah Lakanwal,

later accused in a D.C. shooting. The revelation that a D.C. shooting suspect had been granted asylum after CIA and NCTC vetting sparked politicized attacks on vetting processes, risking collective suspicion of asylum seekers more broadly. (27 Nov 2025)

12. Indiana redistricting advocates and unknown perpetrators used swatting against lawmakers resisting GOP-favored maps. Swatting incidents targeting Indiana legislators who opposed redistricting plans weaponized police responses to intimidate elected officials, undermining free deliberation on core rules of representation. (26 Nov 2025)

13. ICE officers in Seattle detained Native American actor Elaine Miles over her tribal ID. ICE's detention of a Native American citizen whose tribal ID was deemed "fake" exposed how racial profiling and ignorance of tribal sovereignty can subject Indigenous people to arbitrary immigration enforcement. (28 Nov 2025)

14. The Trump Administration and DC authorities deployed National Guard troops in Washington, D.C. for domestic patrols. Sending hundreds of Guard troops into D.C. streets for joint patrols with police, over local objections, blurred the line between civilian policing and military presence, raising risks of intimidation and rights violations. (27 Nov 2025; 28 Nov 2025)

15. Secretary of Defense Pete Hegseth allegedly issued illegal kill orders during military operations. Reports that Hegseth told a commander to "kill everybody" in a missile strike, causing civilian deaths, suggested disregard for laws of war and heightened the risk that military power could be used without legal restraint. (27 Nov 2025)

16. The Trump Administration officials responded to Charlie Kirk's assassination with threats to restrict speech. Using a political killing to float limits on free speech and invoke civil-war rhetoric framed dissent as a security threat, laying groundwork for curbs on expressive rights. (27 Nov 2025)

## Economic Structure

1. The Trump Administration canceled release of the 3Q GDP advanced estimate. Halting publication of a key GDP estimate during economic strain reduced transparency around macroeconomic performance, enabling political actors to shape narratives without the constraint of official data. (23 Nov 2025)

2. FDA and EPA withdrew approval of OCALIVA and extended a pesticide tolerance on cranberries. Regulatory decisions to pull an unsafe liver drug and extend emergency herbicide use on cranberries showed agencies

balancing public health protections with agricultural and industry needs within established statutory frameworks. (24 Nov 2025; 26 Nov 2025)

3. Meidas-reported analysts documented rising electricity prices and widespread power shutoffs tied to data center demand. Sharp increases in utility bills and disconnections, partly driven by grid upgrades for data centers, shifted infrastructure costs onto households, exacerbating inequality and raising questions about who benefits from energy policy choices. (24 Nov 2025)

4. The Trump Administration oversaw a severe affordability crisis with high inflation and weak consumer confidence. Reports of double-digit price increases and collapsing consumer confidence highlighted economic mismanagement that left many unable to afford basics, undermining material conditions that support stable democratic participation. (25 Nov 2025)

5. The Trump Administration implemented a \$12 billion bailout for farmers hurt by its own trade policies. The large farm bailout used public funds to offset damage from administration tariffs, socializing losses from politically driven trade conflicts while leaving underlying policy choices and beneficiaries largely intact. (26 Nov 2025)

6. Elon Musk's xAI and US military partners relied on Chinese-made transformers for a military-linked AI supercomputer. Dependence on Chinese hardware for the Colossus AI system used by the US military exposed critical infrastructure to foreign supply-chain risks, intertwining national security with opaque private procurement decisions. (26 Nov 2025)

7. Republican officials pursued efforts to cancel or block domestic battery manufacturing projects. Political moves to obstruct battery manufacturing undermined investment in key clean-tech industries, potentially ceding strategic economic ground to foreign competitors and entrenching fossil-fuel interests. (27 Nov 2025)

8. The Trump Administration rolled out a quiet \$12 billion farmer bailout while blaming predecessors for economic woes. Pairing a large bailout with rhetoric blaming Biden for small-business pessimism illustrated how economic pain and relief can be framed to deflect responsibility while channelling benefits to politically important constituencies. (28 Nov 2025)

9. EPA and related agencies announced major water infrastructure loan programs and environmental approvals. EPA's WIFIA and SWIFIA funding notices and regional haze approvals committed billions in low-cost loans and regulatory support for water and air projects, shaping long-term public infrastructure and environmental quality. (28 Nov 2025)

## Information, Memory, and Manipulation

1. X platform transparency tool developers revealed foreign origins of prominent MAGA accounts. A new tool on X showing that key MAGA influencers operate from abroad highlighted the role of foreign actors in shaping US political discourse and the need for transparency in online influence. (23 Nov 2025)

2. HHS Secretary Robert F. Kennedy Jr. ordered CDC website changes on vaccines and autism contrary to scientific consensus. Kennedy's directive to alter CDC vaccine messaging, later publicly acknowledged, politicized core public health information and undermined trust in evidence-based guidance from a key federal agency. (24 Nov 2025)

3. California prosecutors' office used AI to draft a criminal motion that contained fabricated citations. Reliance on AI-generated text that hallucinated legal citations in a criminal filing raised concerns about the integrity of court documents and the need for safeguards when using automated tools in justice processes. (26 Nov 2025)

4. The Trump Administration leaked false claims of a Ukraine peace deal to media outlets. By feeding reporters a fabricated narrative of a Ukraine peace agreement based on Russian terms, the administration used disinformation to shape public perceptions of war and diplomacy. (25 Nov 2025)

5. Tennessee Secretary of State Tre Hargett ordered a purge review of LGBTQ-themed books in public libraries. Mandating removal of LGBTQ-related books from 181 libraries under anti-DEI and "gender ideology" rules used state power to curate acceptable identities and narratives in public memory. (25 Nov 2025)

6. Federal Communications Commission sought comment on local TV stations' ability to meet public interest obligations. The FCC's inquiry into how national programmers affect local stations' public-interest duties opened a discussion on structural imbalances in media markets that can limit local news autonomy. (28 Nov 2025)

7. Federal Communications Commission invited comments on E-Rate and other telecom information collections. FCC notices on data collections for universal service and consumer protections affected how information about telecom services and school connectivity is gathered, influencing oversight of digital access. (25 Nov 2025; 28 Nov 2025)

8. Federal Communications Commission prohibited authorization of certain high-risk communications equipment. FCC's rule blocking authorization of equipment on its Covered List aimed to protect networks from foreign

security risks, but also concentrated gatekeeping power over which technologies can enter US markets. (25 Nov 2025)

9. Federal Communications Commission announced intent to dismiss older TCPA petitions to streamline its docket. By moving to dismiss long-pending TCPA petitions, the FCC sought to clear regulatory backlogs, which could both improve clarity and foreclose unresolved challenges affecting consumer robocall protections. (28 Nov 2025)

10. President Trump repeatedly threatened to revoke ABC's broadcast license over critical coverage. Trump's renewed suggestion that the FCC should strip ABC's license for unfavorable reporting continued a pattern of using regulatory threats to intimidate independent media. (26 Nov 2025)

11. President Trump verbally attacked female reporters during a press conference. Trump's insults toward women journalists contributed to a hostile environment for the press, particularly for women, and signaled that critical questioning may be met with personal denigration rather than substantive answers. (27 Nov 2025)

12. Noahpinion and federal education agencies reported and released data showing steep declines in student reading and math. Federal test results revealing large shares of students below basic proficiency, amplified by commentary, underscored systemic educational failures that weaken civic literacy and informed participation. (26 Nov 2025)

13. The Trump Administration and allies promoted disinformation about elections and Ukraine policy. Narratives around Tina Peters, autopen "illegality," and a fabricated Ukraine peace deal exemplified elite-driven disinformation campaigns that distort public understanding of elections and foreign policy. (23 Nov 2025; 25 Nov 2025; 27 Nov 2025; 28 Nov 2025)

14. Disney and streaming consumers experienced mass subscription cancellations after Jimmy Kimmel's suspension. Millions of cancellations of Disney+ and Hulu subscriptions in response to politically pressured suspension of Jimmy Kimmel showed how regulatory intimidation can reshape media markets and provoke consumer backlash. (26 Nov 2025)

15. Global EV Alliance pollsters found that over half of Americans would avoid Tesla for political reasons. Survey results indicating that many consumers shun Tesla over Elon Musk's politics highlighted how corporate political activity feeds back into market behavior, indirectly shaping which voices dominate public discourse. (26 Nov 2025)

16. Federal government and education systems adopted grading and admissions policies that obscure academic performance. "No zeros" grading and elimination of standardized tests in some systems contributed to grade

inflation and weaker signals of competence, complicating public understanding of educational outcomes and readiness. (26 Nov 2025)

17. Oregon education authorities reported high rates of chronic absenteeism among schoolchildren. Data showing that about a third of Oregon students are chronically absent pointed to deep engagement problems that erode the foundations of civic education and long-term democratic capacity. (26 Nov 2025)

## **CHAPTER 20**

# **WEEK 46 (29 NOV 2025 – 5 DEC 2025): IMPUNITY AS OPERATING SYSTEM**

*A week of layered decisions turned clemency, immigration, security, and information policy into tools of faction, family, and fear rather than public trust.*

This was an especially intense week for the erosion of democratic institutions, centered on three main areas: weaponization of law, racialized immigration enforcement, and the normalization of extrajudicial violence. The presidency and Justice Department were repeatedly used to protect elites and allies—such as issuing mass pardons for corrupt officials and foreign traffickers, the DOJ memo removing PREA protections for LGBTQ+ prisoners, and politically targeting antifa and leftist groups—while disadvantaging opponents and vulnerable populations. Immigration policies shifted toward de facto group-based exclusion, with nationwide pauses on asylum and Afghan processing, adjudicative holds and re-reviews for 19 “high-risk” countries, expanded travel bans, and aggressive ICE raids that disregarded court orders and due process. Meanwhile, the Hegseth/Bradley boat-strike campaign and new Pacific strikes further entrenched a doctrine of perpetual, often questionable “war” on drug traffickers, with Congress scrambling to regain oversight afterward. Efforts to control information and foster chaos increased through a White House media enemies site, suppression of economic data, and a far-right-influenced national security strategy. Limited pockets of resistance emerged—federal courts blocking warrantless immigration arrests, rulings against illegal U.S. attorney appointments, and mandated releases of Epstein-related files—but these were overshadowed by systemic moves toward impunity, stratified citizenship, and militarized governance.

## Power and Authority

1. President Trump pardoned former Honduran president Juan Orlando Hernández, convicted of drug trafficking. By pardoning a foreign leader convicted of major narcotics crimes, the president used clemency to shield a powerful ally from accountability, weakening the deterrent effect of drug enforcement and signaling selective application of justice. (29 Nov 2025; 1 Dec 2025; 2 Dec 2025)

2. President Trump commuted the prison sentence of fraud executive David Gentile shortly after incarceration. The commutation for a financier convicted in a \$1.6 billion fraud case showed executive clemency being used to relieve a wealthy offender of punishment, undermining equal treatment under the law for large-scale financial crimes. (30 Nov 2025; 1 Dec 2025)

3. President Trump granted a full pardon to indicted congressman Henry Cuellar in a foreign bribery case. Pardoning a sitting member of Congress accused of a \$600,000 bribery scheme signaled that political connections can override corruption prosecutions, eroding deterrence for public integrity violations. (3 Dec 2025)

4. President Trump issued a full pardon to entertainment executive Tim Leiweke facing a public corruption indictment. The pardon of an executive accused of rigging a public university arena bid further normalized using clemency to terminate corruption cases involving influential figures, weakening accountability for misuse of public resources. (4 Dec 2025)

5. President Trump issued more than 2,000 pardons and commutations in a single year, many benefiting allies and elites. The unprecedented volume and targeting of clemency toward political allies and wealthy offenders turned a constitutional safeguard into a tool of impunity, weakening the justice system's capacity to constrain executive favorites. (4 Dec 2025)

6. President Trump publicly threatened to strip citizenship from certain naturalized immigrants and halt migration from selected countries. Threatening denaturalization and blanket migration bans framed citizenship as a revocable privilege tied to presidential favor, undermining constitutional guarantees and creating a hierarchy of belonging based on origin. (29 Nov 2025; 2 Dec 2025)

7. President Trump directed USCIS to pause adjudication of all pending asylum applications. Ordering a blanket pause on roughly 1.5 million asylum cases converted individualized protection claims into a mass discretionary freeze, concentrating life-altering power in the executive and sidelining statutory refugee processes. (2 Dec 2025; 4 Dec 2025)

8. President Trump announced plans to invalidate all documents signed

by former President Biden using an autopen. Declaring autopen-signed acts by a predecessor void attempted to retroactively nullify lawful presidential decisions, challenging continuity of government and suggesting executive power can unilaterally rewrite settled legal acts. (3 Dec 2025)

9. President Trump held a cabinet meeting marked by praise for controversial military actions and false policy claims. Using a cabinet session to celebrate alleged war crimes and spread disinformation about achievements normalized authoritarian rhetoric at the apex of power, signaling tolerance for unlawful force and narrative manipulation inside the executive. (2 Dec 2025)

10. President Trump oversaw a documented campaign of retaliation targeting at least 470 perceived enemies in government and civil society. A systematic retribution program against hundreds of individuals and organizations used state levers to punish critics, chilling dissent and converting public administration into a loyalty-enforcement apparatus. (30 Nov 2025)

11. President Trump directed envoys Steve Witkoff and Jared Kushner to negotiate a Ukraine settlement with Russia outside normal diplomatic channels. Empowering business-linked confidants to offer recognition of Russian annexations without State Department oversight personalized foreign policy, sidelining institutional checks and raising conflict-of-interest concerns in decisions about another democracy's territory. (29 Nov 2025; 1 Dec 2025)

12. President Trump used a National Security Strategy document to endorse European far-right narratives about migration and "civilisational erasure". Embedding far-right "replacement" rhetoric in official strategy aligned U.S. power with ethnonationalist movements abroad, leveraging national security doctrine to legitimize exclusionary politics rather than democratic norms. (5 Dec 2025)

13. Secretary of Homeland Security Kristi Noem announced plans to expand the U.S. travel ban to more than 30 countries. Expanding a nationality-based travel ban further entrenched executive authority to bar broad populations from entry, weakening individualized risk assessment and straining relations with affected states. (5 Dec 2025)

14. Secretary of Homeland Security Kristi Noem oversaw a policy halting immigration applications from 19 already restricted countries. Imposing an adjudicative hold on all immigration benefits for nationals of 19 countries converted security concerns into blanket origin-based exclusion, undermining equal access to lawful status pathways. (3 Dec 2025; 4 Dec 2025)

15. Secretary of Homeland Security Kristi Noem suspended asylum and visa processing for Afghan nationals and re-evaluated prior approvals. Halting Afghan immigration processing and re-reviewing Biden-era asylum

grants used a single criminal incident to justify sweeping group-based reversals, destabilizing lawful status for thousands who aided U.S. forces. (30 Nov 2025; 2 Dec 2025)

16. Secretary of Homeland Security Kristi Noem announced increased ICE deployments targeting Somali communities in Minneapolis. Targeted deployment of federal agents against a specific immigrant community, following derogatory presidential remarks, blurred the line between security policy and ethnic scapegoating, heightening fears of discriminatory enforcement. (4 Dec 2025)

17. Attorney General Pam Bondi ordered law enforcement to investigate antifa and other designated "domestic terrorists" for tax crimes and revoke leftwing groups' tax-exempt status. Directing tax and criminal scrutiny at ideologically defined opponents repurposed enforcement tools to chill left-leaning civil society, signaling that political alignment can determine exposure to state power. (5 Dec 2025)

18. Attorney General Pam Bondi issued a memo eliminating enforcement of PREA-based protections for LGBTQ+ people in prisons. Rolling back federal oversight of sexual abuse protections for LGBTQ+ prisoners withdrew a key safeguard for a vulnerable group, signaling that their safety is contingent on political priorities rather than legal standards. (5 Dec 2025)

19. Attorney General Pam Bondi faced bipartisan pressure from lawmakers to ensure full release of Jeffrey Epstein files. Congressional demands for a complete Epstein file release pressed the Justice Department to honor transparency commitments in a politically sensitive case, testing whether elite-linked investigations will be fully disclosed. (3 Dec 2025; 4 Dec 2025)

20. Secretary of Commerce Howard Lutnick acknowledged that mass deportation policies were suppressing private-sector job growth. Admitting that deportation drives were harming employment underscored how security-focused executive choices can damage economic conditions, while attempts to deflect blame obscured responsibility for policy-driven job losses. (3 Dec 2025)

21. Deputy Attorney General Todd Blanche warned corporate lawyers that criticizing the administration's white-collar enforcement approach could hurt clients' chances for leniency. Linking favorable treatment in corporate crime cases to public deference pressured attorneys to self-censor, politicizing prosecutorial discretion and weakening independent advocacy in complex investigations. (4 Dec 2025)

22. President Trump used racist and dehumanizing language to describe Somali immigrants in internal meetings. Calling Somali immigrants

"garbage" from the Oval Office normalized xenophobic rhetoric at the highest level, encouraging policies that treat certain communities as less deserving of rights and protection. (4 Dec 2025; 5 Dec 2025)

23. President Trump used social media to call for purges and denaturalization of immigrants after a violent incident. Framing a single crime as justification for sweeping purges and denaturalization campaigns fused inflammatory rhetoric with implied policy, priming the public for collective punishment of immigrant communities. (29 Nov 2025)

24. President Trump oversaw a Justice Department decision to stop publishing key federal economic indicators. Halting release of core economic statistics forced reliance on private data during major job losses, weakening democratic oversight of economic policy and enabling narrative control over deteriorating conditions. (4 Dec 2025)

25. President Trump received a publicized medical memo portraying his MRI and physical exam as "perfectly normal" amid questions about cognition. Releasing selective health information sought to reassure the public about presidential fitness while leaving key questions unanswered, illustrating how executive control over medical disclosures shapes perceptions of capacity. (1 Dec 2025)

26. President Trump saw his job approval rating fall to 36% in a national poll. A sharp decline in approval signaled eroding public consent for presidential leadership, potentially constraining political capital but also incentivizing more aggressive use of unilateral tools. (30 Nov 2025)

27. President Trump was the subject of a detailed investigation into his family's use of public office to advance private business interests. Evidence that the presidential family leveraged state power for cryptocurrency and real estate ventures highlighted deep conflicts of interest, blurring the line between governance and personal enrichment. (1 Dec 2025)

28. President Trump used a White House website section to publicly label specific media outlets and journalists as "offenders". Creating an official "hall of shame" for critical outlets weaponized state platforms against independent media, pressuring journalists and shaping which sources the public is encouraged to distrust. (29 Nov 2025)

29. President Trump oversaw a Justice Department request to re-incarcerate pardoned January 6 defendant Taylor Taranto after renewed threatening behavior. Seeking to re-jail a previously pardoned January 6 participant underscored tensions between earlier blanket clemency and ongoing security risks, highlighting how politicized pardons complicate later enforcement. (3 Dec 2025)

30. President Trump oversaw a Justice Department effort to prioritize

investigations of antifa and leftwing groups as "domestic terrorists". Reorienting domestic terrorism resources toward ideologically defined left groups risked diverting attention from violent far-right threats, aligning security priorities with partisan narratives. (5 Dec 2025)

## Institutions and Governance

1. Senate and House Armed Services Committees launched bipartisan investigations and briefings into alleged unlawful boat strikes ordered by Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth. Congressional inquiries and classified briefings on Caribbean and Pacific boat strikes asserted legislative oversight over potential war crimes, testing whether civilian and military leaders can be held accountable for lethal operations. (29 Nov 2025; 30 Nov 2025; 1 Dec 2025; 2 Dec 2025; 3 Dec 2025; 4 Dec 2025; 5 Dec 2025)

2. Former JAGs Working Group issued a statement declaring Hegseth's alleged orders war crimes and urging prosecution. Former military lawyers publicly labeling the alleged second strike as a war crime reinforced legal norms within the armed forces and increased pressure on institutions to investigate high-level misconduct. (30 Nov 2025)

3. Federal courts ruled that Trump's appointments of Lindsey Halligan and Alina Habba as U.S. attorneys were unlawful, voiding related cases. Striking down improperly installed U.S. attorneys and dismissing politically charged prosecutions reaffirmed Senate confirmation requirements and limited attempts to weaponize federal prosecutions through irregular appointments. (30 Nov 2025; 2 Dec 2025)

4. House Judiciary Committee Chair Jim Jordan subpoenaed former special counsel Jack Smith for closed-door testimony on Trump investigations. Insisting on private testimony from a former special counsel raised concerns that congressional oversight could be used to undermine or selectively leak details of investigations into the sitting president. (4 Dec 2025)

5. House Oversight Committee Democrats released new photos and videos from Jeffrey Epstein's private island to pressure DOJ on file disclosure. Publishing visual evidence from Epstein's properties increased public scrutiny of elite networks and reinforced congressional demands that the Justice Department fully comply with transparency mandates. (1 Dec 2025; 3 Dec 2025)

6. U.S. Congress and President enacted the Taiwan Assurance Implementation Act to deepen security and diplomatic support for Taiwan. Codifying expanded support for Taiwan strengthened legislative guidance over a sensitive foreign policy area, embedding commitments to a democratic

partner in statute rather than leaving them to executive discretion. (2 Dec 2025)

7. U.S. Congress and President authorized special public displays on the National Mall and Washington Monument for early January 2026. Allowing unique displays on key national sites facilitated civic expression in symbolic public spaces, reflecting legislative control over use of federal grounds for mass events. (2 Dec 2025)

8. House Democrats filed a discharge petition to force a vote on extending health insurance premium tax credits. Using a discharge petition to advance expiring health subsidies showed minority lawmakers leveraging procedural tools to address affordability, highlighting internal tensions over social policy in a polarized Congress. (4 Dec 2025)

9. Indiana State Senator Greg Walker refused to support a Trump-backed redistricting plan he said violated ethics and the Hatch Act. A Republican state legislator's public rejection of a federally pressured map underscored resistance within institutions to partisan manipulation of electoral boundaries by the executive branch. (30 Nov 2025)

10. Federal judiciary blocked widespread warrantless immigration arrests in Washington DC and required probable-cause documentation. A preliminary injunction against mass warrantless arrests reaffirmed constitutional constraints on immigration enforcement, forcing agencies to document probable cause and curbing emergency-based overreach. (3 Dec 2025)

11. U.S. Supreme Court approved Texas's redrawn congressional map adding multiple Republican-leaning districts. Overturning a lower court's finding of racial gerrymandering and allowing a pro-GOP map entrenched partisan advantages in representation, illustrating how high court doctrine can facilitate durable electoral skew. (5 Dec 2025)

12. U.S. Supreme Court agreed to hear a challenge to Trump's executive order restricting birthright citizenship. Taking up the legality of curtailing birthright citizenship put core Fourteenth Amendment protections under review, with potential to redefine who is automatically recognized as a citizen at birth. (5 Dec 2025)

13. Federal judge Rodney Smith ordered release of Epstein grand jury transcripts under the Epstein Files Transparency Act. Unsealing grand jury materials in a high-profile abuse case implemented a new transparency law, expanding public access to historically secret proceedings involving powerful figures. (5 Dec 2025)

14. Federal judiciary declined to re-indict New York Attorney General Letitia James after earlier unlawful prosecution efforts. A grand jury's refusal to revive charges against a state attorney general, following rulings against

illegal appointments, signaled institutional resistance to politically motivated federal prosecutions. (3 Dec 2025; 5 Dec 2025)

15. Federal judge Charles Breyer questioned the legality of continued federal control over the California National Guard. Judicial scrutiny of prolonged federalization of a state's National Guard highlighted tensions between state sovereignty and executive use of military forces in domestic contexts. (5 Dec 2025)

16. Federal judiciary in Florida initially ordered closure of the "Alligator Alcatraz" immigration facility before appellate judges blocked it. A trial court's closure order over human rights concerns, reversed by Trump-appointed appellate judges, illustrated how higher courts can sustain harsh detention regimes despite documented abuses. (4 Dec 2025)

17. Federal court in Alabama selected a student-drawn state senate map to remedy Voting Rights Act violations. Choosing a citizen-submitted map that better protected Black voters' influence showed courts actively correcting racial vote dilution when legislatures failed to produce compliant districts. (30 Nov 2025)

18. Federal court in New Orleans held a trial to assess fairness of a \$230 million clergy abuse settlement by the local archdiocese. Judicial review of a large bankruptcy settlement for abuse survivors tested whether church-led compensation plans adequately address decades of institutional wrongdoing and victim needs. (2 Dec 2025)

19. Federal Trade Commission and state attorneys general filed an antitrust lawsuit against Amazon over algorithmic pricing and market manipulation. Challenging Amazon's pricing algorithms and dominance signaled renewed regulatory willingness to confront tech monopolies whose practices can distort markets and harm consumers. (4 Dec 2025)

20. Federal judiciary heard Maurene Comey's lawsuit alleging politically motivated firing from the Justice Department. A case claiming a prosecutor was dismissed to punish her father, former FBI director James Comey, raised questions about partisan retaliation within DOJ personnel decisions. (4 Dec 2025)

21. House Oversight Committee released Epstein estate documents revealing ties between Epstein and political and economic elites. Publishing estate records exposed networks connecting Epstein to powerful figures, increasing pressure on institutions to investigate whether influence shielded him from earlier accountability. (1 Dec 2025)

22. North Carolina House Oversight Committee canceled a scheduled hearing on charges against the Chapel Hill School District without explanation. Abruptly canceling an oversight meeting left alleged misconduct in a

school district unexamined, delaying potential accountability and raising concerns about political interference in state-level scrutiny. (1 Dec 2025)

23. U.S. Court of International Trade received Costco's lawsuit challenging Trump's use of emergency powers to impose tariffs. A major retailer's suit against emergency-based tariffs tested judicial willingness to limit executive trade powers that can function as broad taxes without congressional approval. (2 Dec 2025)

24. House and Senate Judiciary Committees scheduled hearings on FBI Director Kash Patel's leadership after a critical agents' report. Planned hearings on an internal report describing the FBI as "udderless" under Kash Patel reflected congressional concern that politicized leadership was degrading core law enforcement capacity. (30 Nov 2025; 1 Dec 2025)

25. New York City Council introduced a bill to ban PFAS chemicals in firefighters' protective gear and expand health monitoring. Local legislation to remove toxic "forever chemicals" from firefighting gear and test water and blood reflected municipal use of lawmaking to protect worker health where federal standards lag. (2 Dec 2025)

26. Texas legislature enacted a law allowing residents to sue anyone involved in providing or mailing abortion pills into the state. Creating private rights of action with six-figure penalties against abortion pill providers extended Texas's bounty-style enforcement model, exporting its restrictions across state lines and complicating federalism. (4 Dec 2025)

27. House Judiciary Committee Republicans subpoenaed Jack Smith while rejecting his request for public testimony. Insisting on closed-door questioning of a former special counsel investigating Trump raised fears that oversight could be used to discredit or selectively leak sensitive investigative details. (4 Dec 2025)

28. Arizona, Colorado, Missouri, and Ohio attorneys general secured settlements and filed lawsuits against dollar-store chains for systemic overcharging. State enforcement actions against deceptive pricing at discount chains demonstrated subnational regulators using consumer protection law to defend low-income shoppers from routine overcharges. (3 Dec 2025)

29. House Oversight Committee released Epstein-related materials and pressed DOJ ahead of a statutory deadline for full file disclosure. Coordinated document releases and deadline pressure sought to ensure that the Epstein Files Transparency Act produced meaningful public access rather than partial or delayed compliance. (3 Dec 2025; 4 Dec 2025)

## Civil Rights and Dissent

1. Immigration and Customs Enforcement and NYPD conducted a raid in Manhattan's Chinatown that was blocked by protesters, leading to arrests. A large protest that thwarted an ICE raid, with local police assisting federal agents despite sanctuary policies, highlighted conflicts between community resistance and law enforcement over immigration enforcement. (29 Nov 2025)

2. ICE and DHS planned and executed large-scale immigration operations in Raleigh, New Orleans, Los Angeles, and Minneapolis. Coordinated raids and strike teams targeting immigrant workers and specific ethnic communities, sometimes detaining people despite court orders, intensified fears of racial profiling and due-process violations. (1 Dec 2025; 2 Dec 2025; 4 Dec 2025; 5 Dec 2025)

3. Department of Veterans Affairs created an internal database of non-citizen workers to share with immigration enforcement agencies. Compiling and sharing immigration data on VA staff blurred lines between healthcare employment and enforcement, potentially chilling recruitment and undermining trust in a key public service institution. (3 Dec 2025)

4. Department of Homeland Security and ICE used pepper spray and force against protesters and a newly elected congresswoman during a Tucson raid. Deploying chemical agents on demonstrators and a sitting member of Congress during an immigration operation raised serious concerns about excessive force and respect for protest rights. (5 Dec 2025)

5. Attorney General Pam Bondi directed law enforcement to investigate antifa and similar groups for tax violations as "domestic terrorists". Targeting leftwing groups' tax status under a terrorism label risked criminalizing dissent and using financial regulation to suppress oppositional organizing. (5 Dec 2025)

6. Department of Justice issued a memo ending enforcement of PREA protections for LGBTQ+ people in prisons. Removing accountability mechanisms for sexual abuse protections left LGBTQ+ prisoners more exposed to violence, signaling that their safety is a low priority in federal corrections policy. (5 Dec 2025)

7. Federal judge Beryl Howell enjoined warrantless immigration arrests in DC and required probable-cause documentation. The injunction protected residents from dragnet arrests lacking individualized suspicion, reinforcing constitutional safeguards against arbitrary detention in immigration enforcement. (3 Dec 2025)

8. Texas legislature enacted a law enabling private lawsuits against anyone involved in providing abortion pills into the state. Allowing residents

to sue out-of-state providers and manufacturers for mailing abortion pills extended Texas's restrictive regime beyond its borders, chilling reproductive healthcare access nationwide. (4 Dec 2025)

9. Starbucks Workers United expanded a nationwide strike involving thousands of baristas over stalled bargaining and alleged retaliation. A large-scale strike at a major service employer highlighted workers' use of collective action to contest unfair labor practices and demand a voice in corporate decision-making. (2 Dec 2025)

10. The 50501 Movement organized a nationwide Cyber Monday boycott of major retailers collaborating with the Trump administration. Coordinated consumer boycotts of large corporations sought to use economic pressure as a form of protest against perceived corporate complicity in democratic back-sliding. (1 Dec 2025)

11. Federal prosecutors charged dozens in Minnesota with massive welfare fraud in a child-feeding program. Prosecuting large-scale fraud in a program for feeding children addressed serious abuse of public funds, though officials' framing of the case risked stigmatizing an entire immigrant community. (5 Dec 2025)

12. Utah prosecutors charged a protest safety volunteer with manslaughter after a fatal shooting at a "No Kings" rally. Charging a volunteer who killed a bystander while intervening at a protest underscored legal limits on armed self-appointed security and the risks of firearms at demonstrations. (4 Dec 2025)

13. California court sentenced animal-rights activist Zoe Rosenberg to jail and restitution for breaking into a slaughterhouse. Imposing jail time and six-figure restitution on an activist who removed animals from a slaughterhouse highlighted the legal system's limited tolerance for direct-action tactics framed as "rescue." (5 Dec 2025)

14. New York City Mayor Eric Adams issued executive orders restricting city support for BDS-aligned investment decisions and directing review of protests near houses of worship. Barring city pension officials from aligning with BDS and ordering NYPD to consider new protest rules near religious sites constrained certain political expressions and could narrow protest spaces. (4 Dec 2025)

15. Department of Homeland Security spokesperson refused to dispute Trump's racist remarks about Somali immigrants while alleging widespread fraud. Echoing unsubstantiated claims about Somali fraud without challenging racist language lent official weight to stigmatizing narratives that can justify harsher treatment of targeted communities. (3 Dec 2025)

16. Stephen Miller argued publicly that Afghan immigrants should be

judged as a group rather than as individuals. Promoting collective judgment of Afghan immigrants reinforced a worldview in which entire nationalities are presumed suspect, supporting policies that erode individualized rights protections. (5 Dec 2025)

17. Federal judge in DC blocked warrantless immigration arrests and required documentation of probable cause. The injunction curtailed broad emergency-based arrest powers, reinforcing that immigration enforcement must still respect basic constitutional protections against arbitrary detention. (3 Dec 2025)

## Economic Structure

1. U.S. government under President Trump used a "golden share" to exert control over US Steel and block a plant closure. Acquiring special control rights in a major steel company allowed the state to dictate corporate decisions, blurring boundaries between public authority and private enterprise in ways that can favor politically connected interests. (30 Nov 2025)

2. The Trump Administration implemented tariffs that drove a 281% year-on-year surge in tariff revenue, raising consumer prices. Tariffs functioning as a de facto national sales tax shifted costs onto consumers, especially lower-income households, while centralizing trade policy impacts in executive hands. (30 Nov 2025)

3. The Trump Administration issued export permits for four new LNG terminals, reversing a prior pause. Expanding LNG export capacity despite projected domestic price hikes prioritized energy exporters and geopolitical goals over household energy affordability and climate concerns. (1 Dec 2025)

4. Jared Kushner and Affinity Partners continued collecting large management fees from foreign sovereign investors while advising on U.S. foreign policy. Ongoing multimillion-dollar payments from foreign funds, including Saudi Arabia's, to a presidential adviser's firm created serious emoluments and conflict-of-interest risks in shaping U.S. policy. (3 Dec 2025)

5. Steve Witkoff maintained a real estate partnership with sanctioned billionaire Len Blavatnik while serving as a special envoy. A peace envoy's ongoing business with a sanctioned oligarch, combined with an unsigned ethics review of his disclosures, raised doubts about whether foreign-linked capital was influencing U.S. diplomatic positions. (1 Dec 2025)

6. Donald Trump Jr. and Vulcan Elements secured a \$620 million Pentagon loan and Commerce support for a rare-earth magnet startup. A massive defense loan to a firm backed by the president's son, coupled with

Pentagon warrants, exemplified how industrial policy can double as a vehicle for family-linked enrichment. (4 Dec 2025)

7. World Liberty Financial faced potential Nasdaq delisting and regulatory issues while tied to the Trump family. Compliance failures and money-laundering findings at a Trump-linked crypto firm highlighted governance risks when politically connected companies operate in lightly regulated financial sectors. (4 Dec 2025)

8. Commerce Secretary Howard Lutnick acknowledged that deportation policies were depressing job numbers while deflecting blame. Admitting that immigration crackdowns hurt employment underscored how nativist policies can damage labor markets, even as officials sought to obscure the link between executive choices and economic pain. (3 Dec 2025)

9. The Trump Administration presided over a loss of 32,000 private-sector jobs in November amid repeated weak payroll reports. Sustained private-sector job losses signaled a weakening economy under current policies, with particular strain on manufacturing and small businesses that can erode broad-based prosperity. (3 Dec 2025)

10. The Trump Administration oversaw sharp increases in health insurance premiums without advancing a replacement reform plan. Rising family premiums approaching five figures annually, absent a coherent policy response, deepened financial insecurity and limited practical access to healthcare for many households. (4 Dec 2025)

11. Major consumer brands reported sales declines in heavily Latino neighborhoods due to fear from mass deportation policies. Economic slowdowns in targeted communities showed how aggressive immigration enforcement can destabilize local markets and harm businesses reliant on marginalized consumers. (4 Dec 2025)

12. Arizona, Colorado, Missouri, and Ohio attorneys general secured settlements and pursued lawsuits against dollar stores for systemic overcharging of customers. State actions against deceptive pricing at discount chains protected low-income shoppers from routine overcharges, demonstrating how subnational enforcement can counter exploitative business models. (3 Dec 2025)

13. Federal Communications Commission implemented new interim rate caps for incarcerated people's communication services. Lowering and standardizing prison phone and video rates reduced exploitative charges that burden incarcerated individuals and their families, modestly rebalancing a long-abusive market. (5 Dec 2025)

14. Federal Communications Commission announced the effective date for amended cable television rate regulations. Updating cable rate rules and

associated reporting requirements affected how providers justify charges, with potential implications for consumer costs and local oversight. (5 Dec 2025)

15. Federal Communications Commission revised filing schedules and information collections for broadcasters and telecom providers. Adjusting application windows and data-reporting obligations for broadcasters and telecoms shaped market entry and compliance burdens, influencing media diversity and infrastructure planning. (1 Dec 2025; 3 Dec 2025; 5 Dec 2025)

16. Environmental Protection Agency extended and then adjusted compliance deadlines for emissions standards in oil, gas, and steel sectors. Changing timelines for pollution controls in fossil fuel and steel industries balanced industry compliance challenges against environmental and health protections, with delays favoring regulated firms. (3 Dec 2025)

17. Environmental Protection Agency rescinded an interim extension of compliance deadlines for coke oven hazardous air pollutant standards. Reinstating earlier deadlines for coke oven emissions signaled a willingness to prioritize public health over industry requests for more time to meet hazardous pollution standards. (5 Dec 2025)

18. Environmental Protection Agency approved Texas and Oklahoma regional haze plans and released multiple environmental impact statements. Approving state haze plans and publishing EIS notices advanced long-term air quality and visibility goals while formalizing how major projects' environmental impacts are reviewed. (5 Dec 2025)

19. Environmental Protection Agency solicited comments on pesticide registrations, new chemical submissions, and PCB reporting requirements. Seeking public input on pesticides, new chemicals, and PCB recordkeeping reflected ongoing regulatory engagement with environmental and health risks tied to industrial and agricultural practices. (1 Dec 2025; 2 Dec 2025; 4 Dec 2025)

20. Food and Drug Administration issued multiple draft and final guidances on drug manufacturing, labeling, and safety testing. New FDA guidances on extractables, medical gases, monoclonal antibodies, QTc labeling, and generic drug studies updated regulatory expectations, affecting costs and timelines for pharmaceutical development. (1 Dec 2025; 2 Dec 2025; 3 Dec 2025; 4 Dec 2025; 5 Dec 2025)

21. Drug Enforcement Administration received applications from several firms to manufacture or import controlled substances for research and veterinary use. DEA registrations sought by pharmaceutical and veterinary firms for substances like THC, psychedelics, and potent opioids illustrated how

controlled-drug policy shapes scientific research and specialized care markets. (1 Dec 2025; 3 Dec 2025)

22. Transportation Security Administration implemented a \$45 fee for the Confirm.ID alternative identity verification program. Charging travelers for temporary identity verification services introduced a new cost barrier to air travel for people lacking standard ID, with equity implications for marginalized groups. (3 Dec 2025)

23. U.S. Census Bureau sought OMB approval and public comment for major economic and health surveys. Maintaining and revising surveys on retail trade, children's health, and other topics preserved critical data infrastructure that informs policy decisions and public understanding of social conditions. (3 Dec 2025; 5 Dec 2025)

24. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention proposed or renewed multiple public health data collections on surveillance, blood supply, STIs, and fellowships. Expanding and streamlining data systems for disease surveillance, blood use, and workforce training strengthened the evidence base for health policy, even as other parts of government restricted information. (5 Dec 2025)

25. California Department of Pesticide Regulation proposed loosening restrictions on toxic anticoagulant rodenticides despite evidence of wildlife harm. Easing limits on harmful rodenticides against legislative intent highlighted how regulatory agencies can prioritize pest-control and commercial interests over environmental and species protections. (5 Dec 2025)

26. New York City Mayor Zohran Mamdani launched an initiative to cut fines, fees, and red tape for small businesses. Reducing regulatory burdens and boosting support for small firms aimed to rebalance an urban economy often tilted toward large players, potentially broadening opportunity and local resilience. (3 Dec 2025)

27. San Francisco Mayor Daniel Lurie signed the PermitSF legislative package to streamline permitting and cut small-business fees. Simplifying permits and eliminating certain fees for storefront improvements and signage sought to lower barriers to entry for entrepreneurs, supporting a more diverse local business ecosystem. (3 Dec 2025)

28. The Trump Administration stopped publishing key federal economic indicators, forcing reliance on private data amid mass layoffs. Suppressing official economic statistics during a year with nearly 1.2 million job cuts obscured the true state of the economy, weakening democratic accountability for policy outcomes. (4 Dec 2025)

29. Arizona Attorney General reached a \$600,000 settlement with Family Dollar over pricing discrepancies. Holding a discount chain financially

accountable for overcharging customers demonstrated state-level enforcement capacity to protect consumers from systemic small-dollar fraud. (3 Dec 2025)

## Information, Memory, and Manipulation

1. White House launched an official website section cataloging and attacking media outlets for alleged bias. Using an official platform to single out "offender" news organizations sought to delegitimize independent reporting and steer public trust toward administration-approved narratives. (29 Nov 2025)

2. New York Times sued the Pentagon over access rules that favored pro-Trump influencers over traditional reporters. Challenging preferential access for friendly media raised constitutional questions about viewpoint discrimination in press credentials and the government's role in shaping who can cover defense policy. (3 Dec 2025)

3. The Trump Administration stopped publishing key federal economic indicators, increasing reliance on private data. Withholding official economic statistics during significant job cuts obscured the scale of downturns, enabling political leaders to manage perceptions while limiting independent evaluation of policy impacts. (4 Dec 2025)

4. Department of Defense Inspector General released reports finding that Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth shared sensitive war plans over Signal. IG findings that the defense secretary used an unapproved messaging app for classified plans highlighted internal breaches of security protocols and the risks of informal communication channels in war decisions. (3 Dec 2025; 4 Dec 2025)

5. White House Press Secretary Karoline Leavitt defended the legality of a controversial second drone strike without providing supporting details. Asserting legality while withholding evidence contributed to an opaque narrative around alleged war crimes, making it harder for the public and Congress to assess whether international law was respected. (2 Dec 2025)

6. Department of Homeland Security spokesperson echoed unsubstantiated claims of widespread Somali fraud while declining to challenge racist remarks. Repeating vague allegations without evidence lent official credence to stigmatizing narratives, shaping public opinion against a minority community and justifying harsher enforcement. (3 Dec 2025)

7. President Trump and allies promoted far-right "civilisational erasure" narratives in a National Security Strategy document. Embedding conspiracy-tinted language about demographic replacement in official strategy docu-

ments mainstreamed extremist frames, influencing how threats and allies are defined in U.S. foreign policy. (5 Dec 2025)

8. President Trump claimed that Biden's autopilot-signed pardons and orders were invalid, despite legal consensus. Asserting that a routine signing method voided a predecessor's acts attempted to rewrite legal norms through rhetoric, sowing confusion about the validity of past decisions and undermining institutional continuity. (3 Dec 2025)

9. Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth shared a graphic of a children's book character shooting drug traffickers and used an artist's music without consent in ICE propaganda. Appropriating popular cultural symbols and music for violent state messaging sought to normalize aggressive enforcement and associate it with familiar, family-friendly imagery. (1 Dec 2025)

10. Sabrina Carpenter successfully pressured the White House to remove an ICE video using her song without consent. A prominent artist's pushback forced the administration to retract a propaganda video, demonstrating how cultural figures can check politicized use of their work in state messaging. (4 Dec 2025)

11. House Oversight Committee and federal courts implemented the Epstein Files Transparency Act by releasing investigative and grand jury records. Mandated unsealing of Epstein-related records increased transparency around elite-linked abuse cases, countering tendencies to keep politically sensitive archives hidden. (3 Dec 2025; 4 Dec 2025; 5 Dec 2025)

12. National Archives and Records Administration announced public meetings of the Advisory Committee on the Records of Congress. Open meetings on legislative archives management supported public oversight of how congressional records are preserved, contributing to institutional memory and accountability. (3 Dec 2025)

13. Office of Government Information Services and Office of Information Policy scheduled a public meeting of the Chief FOIA Officers Council. A public FOIA council meeting provided a forum to discuss agency compliance with transparency laws, modestly strengthening mechanisms for access to government records. (1 Dec 2025)

14. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention amended and publicized meeting notices for the Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices. Updating and publicizing ACIP meeting times maintained procedural transparency around vaccine policy deliberations, even as the committee's composition shifted toward skeptics. (3 Dec 2025)

15. FBI leadership under Director Kash Patel deprioritized investigations into rightwing extremist groups like the Base while focusing on political enemies. Shifting investigative focus away from violent far-right groups

toward perceived political opponents distorted threat assessments and risked leaving genuine domestic terrorism under-policed. (5 Dec 2025)

16. FBI agents and analysts produced a leaked report describing the bureau as "rudderless" under Director Kash Patel. The internal report portrayed an agency paralyzed by fear and inexperience at the top, suggesting that politicized leadership was degrading the FBI's ability to function as an impartial law enforcement body. (30 Nov 2025; 1 Dec 2025)

17. China's research and industrial system achieved global leadership in high-quality STEM publications and high-tech manufacturing. China's rise in scientific output and advanced manufacturing underscored shifting global knowledge and production centers, affecting how information power and economic leverage are distributed internationally. (4 Dec 2025)

18. FIFA President Gianni Infantino created a FIFA Peace Prize and awarded it to Donald Trump without council consultation. Bestowing an unvetted peace award on Trump used sports diplomacy to burnish his image internationally, raising concerns about politicization of global cultural institutions. (4 Dec 2025)

19. CDC Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices under RFK Jr. appointees debated and then voted to limit universal hepatitis B vaccination for newborns. A vaccine-skeptic-influenced panel's move away from universal infant hepatitis B shots marked a politicized shift in public health guidance, likely to increase confusion and disease risk. (2 Dec 2025; 4 Dec 2025; 5 Dec 2025)

20. Stephen Miller publicly argued that Afghan immigrants import their home country's negative conditions to the U.S. Framing immigrants as carriers of societal dysfunction promoted a narrative that justifies collective suspicion and restrictive policies, rather than evidence-based assessments of individuals. (5 Dec 2025)

## CHAPTER 21

### **WEEK 47 (6 DEC 2025 – 12 DEC 2025): CITIZENSHIP AND POWER FOR SALE**

*A week of hardened borders, leader-centric security, and AI-era crony capitalism, where resistance held the clock still but not the moral floor.*

This was a week of intense structural authoritarian pressure, as the executive branch aggressively centralized power while civil society, courts, and some legislatures mounted notable but insufficient resistance. The most significant actions included Trump's AI preemption order and broader national security strategy, which together assert sweeping federal dominance over states, align foreign and tech policies with regime-backed capital, and weaken independent agencies. Immigration enforcement became more militarized—featuring new deportation aircraft, a militarized border zone, Afghan and veteran detentions, and abuse allegations—deepening stratified citizenship and normalizing security forces as tools of political enforcement. The law was repeatedly weaponized: through selective prosecutions of rivals, shielding of allies, pressure on the ICC, and conduct resembling war crimes in the Caribbean. Information systems leaned further toward manipulation, with prediction markets in news, media consolidation tied to Trump allies, and a White House bias-reporting campaign. Counteractions emerged: courts blocking some deployments and unlawful appointments, Illinois and local actors resisting ICE, Congress conditioning Pentagon funds and strengthening NATO, and Indiana Republicans rejecting gerrymanders. But overall, the picture is clear: executive overreach, crony capitalism, and coercive immigration policies advanced faster than institutional checks could respond.

## Power and Authority

1. The Trump Administration announced restrictive immigration measures targeting Afghan nationals and 19 non-European countries. The administration halted Afghan asylum decisions and paused immigration applications from 19 non-European countries, using security justifications to sharply curtail entry and asylum access for specific nationalities. (6 Dec 2025)

2. President Donald Trump issued an executive order creating Food Supply Chain Security Task Forces. The order empowered DOJ and FTC task forces to investigate anti-competitive behavior in the food sector, expanding executive direction over economic enforcement in a critical supply chain. (6 Dec 2025)

3. The Trump Administration rescinded ICE directive protecting non-citizen veterans from deportation. Revoking protections for non-citizen veterans exposed former service members to detention and removal, signaling willingness to override prior humanitarian safeguards in immigration enforcement. (7 Dec 2025)

4. Department of Veterans Affairs prepared an internal report on non-citizen employees and veterans for the administration. Compiling and sharing detailed data on non-citizen VA staff and veterans risked enabling targeted immigration actions against a politically vulnerable group tied to federal service. (7 Dec 2025)

5. President Donald Trump pardoned Representative Henry Cuellar and his wife on bribery charges. Pardoning a sitting congressman accused of taking foreign bribes highlighted the president's power to nullify corruption prosecutions in ways that can weaken deterrence and expectations of impartial justice. (7 Dec 2025)

6. Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth asserted that President Trump could order military strikes without congressional approval. Hegseth's defense of unilateral strikes off Venezuela framed large uses of force as within sole presidential discretion, eroding expectations of legislative checks on war powers. (8 Dec 2025)

7. The Trump Administration announced a \$12 billion aid package for U.S. farmers funded by tariff revenues. The tariff-funded bailout directed large payments to farmers hurt by trade policy, illustrating how executive trade powers can be used to redistribute resources toward a key political constituency. (8 Dec 2025; 9 Dec 2025)

8. President Donald Trump pressured the Supreme Court to uphold tariffs imposed under an economic emergency declaration. Trump's public insistence that the Court validate tariffs based on a self-declared economic

emergency underscored efforts to stretch emergency authorities and judicial deference over trade policy. (9 Dec 2025)

9. President Donald Trump stated he would appoint a Federal Reserve chair committed to immediate rate cuts. Conditioning the next Fed chair's appointment on pledges to cut interest rates regardless of conditions signaled intent to politicize monetary policy and weaken central bank independence. (9 Dec 2025)

10. The Trump Administration signed a \$140 million contract to buy Boeing 737s for deportation flights. Purchasing dedicated deportation aircraft scaled up the state's capacity for mass removals, embedding aggressive immigration enforcement into long-term federal infrastructure. (10 Dec 2025; 11 Dec 2025)

11. President Donald Trump advocated allowing ACA health insurance subsidies to expire. Supporting the lapse of premium subsidies in favor of direct payments and skimpier plans positioned executive policy against pooled public coverage, risking destabilization of the individual market. (10 Dec 2025)

12. President Donald Trump agreed to allow NVIDIA to sell advanced H200 AI chips to China in exchange for revenue sharing. Authorizing sales of cutting-edge AI chips to China in return for a U.S. revenue share leveraged national-security assets for short-term economic gain and deepened strategic tech interdependence. (8 Dec 2025; 9 Dec 2025)

13. The Trump Administration threatened sanctions on the International Criminal Court to block investigations of U.S. officials. Threatening punitive measures against the ICC to forestall possible prosecutions of Trump and senior officials signaled a readiness to undermine international accountability mechanisms for state conduct. (10 Dec 2025; 11 Dec 2025)

14. President Donald Trump issued an executive order establishing a national AI policy framework that preempts conflicting state laws. The AI order centralized regulatory authority in Washington, directed litigation against state rules, and tied federal funding to compliance, curbing state autonomy over a major emerging technology. (11 Dec 2025; 12 Dec 2025)

15. President Donald Trump issued an executive order targeting foreign-owned proxy advisors and ESG-focused guidance. Directing the SEC and FTC to scrutinize proxy advisors, especially on ESG and DEI issues, used executive power to reshape corporate governance debates in line with administration priorities. (11 Dec 2025)

16. President Donald Trump fired FTC Commissioner Rebecca Slaughter, the last Democratic member of the agency. Removing the remaining Democratic FTC commissioner challenged statutory protections for independent

regulators and concentrated partisan control over a key competition and consumer watchdog. (9 Dec 2025)

17. The Trump Administration pressured Indiana legislators to pass a gerrymandered congressional map by threatening to withhold federal funds. Using federal funding threats to coerce a state into adopting a partisan map blurred lines between national and state authority and weaponized fiscal power for electoral advantage. (11 Dec 2025; 12 Dec 2025)

18. Commerce Secretary Howard Lutnick announced a proposal to sell U.S. citizenship through a \$1 million "Trump Gold Card" program. The plan to grant citizenship in exchange for large payments would formalize a wealth-based track to membership in the polity, deepening stratification in immigration and naturalization policy. (10 Dec 2025)

19. President Donald Trump began a nationwide tour to defend his economic record and tariff policies. Launching a messaging tour to reframe economic discontent around his tariffs and blame predecessors illustrated the use of presidential visibility to manage accountability for contested policies. (12 Dec 2025)

## Institutions and Governance

1. Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices voted to limit universal newborn hepatitis B vaccination recommendations. Revising long-standing guidance on newborn hepatitis B shots, under influence from anti-vaccine appointees, risked undermining standardized public health practice and state-level immunization policies. (6 Dec 2025)

2. New Jersey Superior Court permanently barred former Senator Bob Menendez from holding state or local office. By prohibiting a convicted former senator from future public office, the court reinforced consequences for corruption and sought to protect public trust in elected positions. (6 Dec 2025)

3. Defense Department Inspector General reported that Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth mishandled classified information on Signal. Finding that Hegseth shared sensitive strike details over an unsecured app highlighted internal oversight of senior officials' compliance with security and records rules. (6 Dec 2025; 8 Dec 2025)

4. New York Times sued the Pentagon over restrictive press access policies. Challenging new rules that limited journalists' ability to gather information at the Pentagon tested judicial protections for press access to national security institutions. (6 Dec 2025)

5. U.S. Congress launched an investigation into deportations of non-

citizen veterans. Lawmakers' inquiry into ICE's treatment of veterans sought to reassert legislative oversight over immigration enforcement affecting those who served in the military. (7 Dec 2025)

6. Democratic members of Congress demanded release of video of a lethal Caribbean boat strike. Calls for the Pentagon to release footage of a controversial strike pressed for transparency and accountability in overseas uses of force. (7 Dec 2025; 8 Dec 2025; 9 Dec 2025)

7. Federal judge temporarily blocked prosecutors from accessing evidence in the James Comey case. The order restricting access to a Comey associate's materials underscored judicial checks on investigative overreach and protections against unreasonable searches. (7 Dec 2025)

8. New York trial court held an evidentiary hearing on search and Miranda issues in the Luigi Mangione case. Scrutiny of warrantless searches, Miranda warnings, and sealing of evidence in a high-profile homicide case highlighted due process safeguards and tensions with press access. (7 Dec 2025)

9. U.S. Supreme Court allowed Texas's redrawn congressional map to take effect despite discrimination concerns. Letting a map that likely dilutes minority voting power stand signaled judicial tolerance for partisan and racial gerrymanders that shape national representation. (7 Dec 2025; 9 Dec 2025)

10. House Speaker Mike Johnson removed IVF coverage for service members from the defense authorization bill. Stripping IVF benefits from the NDAA used legislative gatekeeping to limit reproductive healthcare for military families, reflecting ideological control over benefits policy. (8 Dec 2025)

11. Pentagon opened an investigation into Senator Mark Kelly and colleagues over a video on illegal orders. Probing lawmakers for urging troops not to follow unlawful commands blurred lines between civilian oversight and military discipline, potentially chilling constitutional speech. (8 Dec 2025)

12. Alina Habba resigned as U.S. Attorney for New Jersey after courts found her appointment unlawful. Her forced departure following rulings against her non-confirmed appointment reaffirmed the role of Senate confirmation and judicial review in policing executive appointments. (8 Dec 2025)

13. Colleton County court accepted a guilty plea from former clerk Becky Hill for misconduct in the Murdaugh trial. The conviction of a court clerk for mishandling sealed exhibits and lying in court underscored accountability mechanisms for officials who compromise trial integrity. (8 Dec 2025)

14. U.S. Supreme Court heard arguments on presidential power to fire FTC member Rebecca Slaughter. The case over Trump's removal of an FTC

commissioner tested the independence of congressionally created agencies against expansive theories of presidential control. (9 Dec 2025)

15. New York Archdiocese organized a \$300 million fund to settle clergy sexual abuse claims. Raising a large settlement fund and entering mediation with survivors reflected institutional efforts to address historic abuse while managing financial and legal exposure. (9 Dec 2025)

16. Federal prosecutors in Brooklyn moved to drop bribery charges against former Fox executive Hernán López. Abandoning a high-profile FIFA corruption case "in the interest of justice" raised questions about consistency and resolve in prosecuting complex financial crimes. (10 Dec 2025)

17. U.S. District Court for the Northern District of California blocked federal deployment of National Guard troops in Los Angeles. Ordering Guard units returned to state control after a federalization tied to immigration protests reinforced limits on using military forces domestically without clear legal basis. (10 Dec 2025)

18. Montana youth plaintiffs petitioned the state supreme court to enforce a prior climate ruling. Seeking enforcement of a decision recognizing a constitutional right to a clean environment challenged new state laws that appeared to defy judicial authority. (10 Dec 2025)

19. Transportation Security Administration revised its Secure Flight data collection program. Expanding passenger data collection for prescreening and secure-area access adjusted the balance between aviation security and privacy in federal screening systems. (10 Dec 2025)

20. House of Representatives passed a \$900 billion defense authorization bill with conditions on Pentagon transparency. The NDAA boosted defense spending, mandated troop levels abroad, and withheld part of Hegseth's travel budget until strike footage is shared, asserting congressional oversight over military policy. (11 Dec 2025)

21. Federal judge in Maryland ordered the release of Kilmar Ábrego García from ICE custody and later barred his re-detention temporarily. Rulings that ICE lacked authority to hold Ábrego without a final order, and a follow-on restraining order, asserted judicial limits on immigration detention practices. (11 Dec 2025; 12 Dec 2025)

22. Federal grand jury twice declined to indict New York Attorney General Letitia James on mortgage fraud charges. Repeated refusals to indict a prominent Trump critic on contested charges highlighted grand juries' role as a check on potentially politicized prosecutions. (11 Dec 2025)

23. National Trust for Historic Preservation sued President Trump to halt demolition for a White House ballroom project. The lawsuit alleged that a \$300 million East Wing demolition and ballroom lacked required reviews

and approvals, testing legal constraints on presidential alterations to federal property. (12 Dec 2025)

24. House Committee on Ethics received dedicated operating funds for the 119th Congress. Enactment of a funding resolution ensured the House Ethics Committee could continue investigations and enforcement, supporting internal accountability mechanisms. (11 Dec 2025)

25. Select Committee on Strategic Competition with China secured operating funds for the 119th Congress. Funding the China competition committee enabled continued legislative oversight and policy development on a central foreign policy and economic rivalry. (11 Dec 2025)

26. U.S. Congress used the Congressional Review Act to nullify several Bureau of Land Management resource management rules. Disapproving multiple BLM land-use plans through CRA resolutions demonstrated Congress's power to overturn executive environmental rules and reshape federal land policy. (11 Dec 2025)

27. House Judiciary Committee Democrats moved to request release of the classified documents section of Jack Smith's report. Seeking public access to a previously sealed portion of a special counsel report pressed the judiciary to reconsider secrecy once related prosecutions had been dropped. (12 Dec 2025)

28. House Republicans and Democrats failed to advance competing healthcare subsidy bills in the Senate and faced House pressure to extend ACA credits. Senate rejection of both extension and replacement of ACA subsidies, alongside a House discharge effort, exposed partisan gridlock over a core social policy affecting millions. (10 Dec 2025; 11 Dec 2025; 12 Dec 2025)

29. House Speaker Mike Johnson skipped a classified Gang of Eight national security briefing. The Speaker's absence from a key intelligence oversight meeting raised concerns about leadership engagement in supervising sensitive national security activities. (10 Dec 2025)

30. Indiana Senate voted down a Trump-backed mid-decade gerrymandering bill. Rejecting a redistricting plan advanced under federal funding threats showed state legislators resisting partisan manipulation of districts despite pressure from national party leaders. (10 Dec 2025)

31. House of Representatives passed a resolution disapproving a BLM resource management plan amendment. Using a disapproval resolution to overturn a BLM plan underscored Congress's ability to directly reshape executive environmental rulemaking. (11 Dec 2025)

## Civil Rights and Dissent

1. Immigration and Customs Enforcement agents used an attack dog on Wilmer Toledo-Martinez during an arrest. The mauling of an unresisting undocumented man and delayed medical care exemplified excessive force and raised alarms about humane treatment in immigration enforcement. (6 Dec 2025)

2. Immigration and Customs Enforcement increased enforcement activity in Minnesota targeting Somali communities. Stepped-up ICE operations in areas with large Somali populations intensified fears of selective enforcement against specific immigrant communities. (6 Dec 2025)

3. The Trump Administration deployed and federalized National Guard forces in Washington, DC citing a crime emergency. Sending Guard troops to a city with low crime and placing local police under federal control blurred lines between policing and political theater, with deadly consequences for soldiers. (6 Dec 2025; 8 Dec 2025)

4. The Trump Administration and Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth conducted lethal Caribbean boat strikes alleged to constitute war crimes. Reports that survivors of anti-drug strikes were killed in follow-up attacks raised serious questions about extrajudicial killings and adherence to the laws of war. (6 Dec 2025)

5. The Trump Administration rescinded protections and increased deportations of non-citizen veterans. Targeting veterans for removal despite prior service undermined expectations of reciprocal obligations between the state and those who served in its armed forces. (7 Dec 2025)

6. Immigration and Customs Enforcement detained and deported Any Lucia López Belloza despite an emergency court order. Removing a college student to Honduras within 48 hours, apparently in defiance of a federal stay, highlighted due process violations in immigration enforcement. (8 Dec 2025)

7. Civil rights coalition accused ICE officers of abuse and illegal deportations at Fort Bliss detention facility. Allegations of beatings, sexual abuse, and unlawful removals at a large Texas camp pointed to systemic rights violations in immigration detention. (9 Dec 2025)

8. More than 200 former DOJ Civil Rights Division staff publicly condemned the Trump administration's dismantling of civil rights enforcement. Their letter described purges of career experts and mission changes that deprioritized traditional civil rights cases in favor of voter fraud narratives. (9 Dec 2025)

9. The Trump Administration accused political rivals of mortgage fraud while similar conduct by Trump went unexamined. Selective allegations

against figures like Fed Governor Lisa Cook, contrasted with lenient treatment of Trump's own records, suggested politicized use of fraud investigations. (9 Dec 2025)

10. Illinois Governor JB Pritzker signed HB 1312 restricting civil immigration arrests at courthouses and sensitive locations. The law limited where federal agents can arrest immigrants and created a right to sue for rights violations, asserting state protections against aggressive federal enforcement. (9 Dec 2025; 12 Dec 2025)

11. Charleston airport police reported that Representative Nancy Mace escalated a minor escort issue into a confrontation. The investigation into Mace's conduct toward TSA and officers highlighted expectations for elected officials' behavior and its impact on frontline staff. (9 Dec 2025)

12. Civil rights organizations and Senator Patty Murray criticized ICE's use of attack dogs and called for detainee's release. Political and advocacy responses to the Toledo-Martinez mauling sought accountability for abusive tactics and better protections for detainees' rights. (6 Dec 2025)

13. University of California, Los Angeles's IDEA reported that ICE crackdowns created fear and bullying among immigrant students. Survey findings that enforcement actions harmed attendance and learning for immigrant youth showed how federal policy can chill access to education and equal treatment. (11 Dec 2025)

14. Pentagon lawyers proposed sending Caribbean strike survivors to El Salvador's CECOT prison before being overruled. The suggestion to transfer detainees to a prison notorious for abuse, later blocked by State Department lawyers, exposed internal tensions over human rights obligations. (11 Dec 2025)

15. Department of Justice and prison authorities faced criticism over handling of Epstein files and Ghislaine Maxwell's conditions. Survivors' counsel argued that lenient treatment and secrecy around Epstein-related records undermined trust in the justice system's willingness to confront elite abuse. (11 Dec 2025)

16. Immigration and Customs Enforcement and FBI detained Belarusian defendant Yana Leonova upon extradition, risking her deportation before trial. ICE's move to deport a woman extradited for prosecution conflicted with DOJ's efforts, illustrating how immigration enforcement can disrupt criminal accountability processes. (11 Dec 2025)

17. U.S. border agents detained commentator Hasan Piker and questioned him about his political views. Holding a U.S. citizen at the border and probing his opinions on Trump and Gaza suggested use of border powers to intimidate outspoken critics. (11 Dec 2025)

18. Immigration and Customs Enforcement increased arrests of Afghan asylum seekers with pending cases. Detaining Afghans who had complied with monitoring and awaited hearings created a climate of fear and raised concerns about good-faith treatment of recent evacuees. (12 Dec 2025)

19. Immigration and Customs Enforcement detained DACA recipient and Muslim photojournalist Ya'akub Vijandre over social media posts. Revoking DACA and jailing a journalist for online speech linked to terrorism allegations raised fears of immigration powers being used to punish expression and faith. (12 Dec 2025)

20. Churches and faith leaders used provocative nativity scenes to protest ICE enforcement. Displaying imagery like a handcuffed baby Jesus to criticize immigration crackdowns showed religious institutions mobilizing symbolic speech against state policies. (12 Dec 2025)

21. Siembra and SiembraNC organized trainings and materials to help businesses and communities resist warrantless ICE raids. Educating owners and municipal staff on Fourth Amendment rights equipped local actors to demand warrants and limit intrusive federal enforcement. (8 Dec 2025; 9 Dec 2025)

22. North Carolina House Select Committee accused the Chapel Hill School Board of "grooming" over DEI initiatives. Aggressive questioning of a local board for supporting diversity programs illustrated how legislative forums can be used to intimidate educators and chill inclusive curricula. (11 Dec 2025)

23. President Donald Trump made derogatory remarks about Somali Americans and female reporters. Labeling Somali Americans "garbage" and attacking women journalists contributed to a hostile climate for minorities and critics, normalizing dehumanizing rhetoric from the presidency. (10 Dec 2025)

24. Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth and Pentagon faced calls and legislative pressure to release video of a lethal boat strike. Resistance to disclosing unedited footage of a controversial strike, despite congressional leverage, highlighted secrecy around potential rights violations in military operations. (7 Dec 2025; 8 Dec 2025; 9 Dec 2025)

25. The Trump Administration created a militarized National Defense Area along the California–Mexico border. Transferring public land to the Navy for a border defense zone empowered military personnel to capture migrants, deepening the militarization of immigration control. (11 Dec 2025)

26. U.S. Army gynecologist Blaine McGraw was sued by 81 women for alleged sexual assault and secret filming. The civil suit against a military doctor for widespread abuse tested whether recent reforms can deliver

accountability and protection for service members and dependents. (12 Dec 2025)

27. Louisiana criminal court convicted Pastor Milton Otto Martin III of indecent behavior with a juvenile. The conviction of a pastor for molesting a teenage congregant showed the justice system addressing abuse within religious institutions, with mandatory sex offender registration. (12 Dec 2025)

28. Stockton City Council voted against applying for a major violence-prevention grant. Rejecting funds for youth outreach while heavily funding police reflected local policy choices that prioritize enforcement over preventive services in addressing violence. (10 Dec 2025)

29. FBI national security branch testified that Antifa is the primary domestic terrorism threat. Labeling Antifa as the top domestic threat and reevaluating extremist categories signaled how official threat designations can shape surveillance and enforcement priorities. (10 Dec 2025)

30. North Carolina immigrant-rights group SiembraNC and allies organized trainings to help immigrants resist ICE enforcement. Community workshops on rights and response to raids strengthened local capacity to contest aggressive immigration tactics and support vulnerable residents. (9 Dec 2025)

31. Webinar organizers scheduled a "Do not turn on us" event to educate military personnel about illegal orders. The planned webinar aimed to reinforce service members' obligations to refuse unlawful commands, supporting rule-of-law norms within the armed forces. (8 Dec 2025)

32. RootsAction released an autopsy of Kamala Harris's 2024 election defeat. The report's critique of campaign strategy and corporate influence contributed to intra-party debate over how to mobilize voters and respond to foreign policy controversies. (10 Dec 2025)

33. The Trump Administration pressured the ICC to amend its statute to avoid prosecuting U.S. and Israeli officials. Seeking to change the court's founding document to shield specific leaders from investigation challenged international mechanisms for redressing human rights abuses. (10 Dec 2025)

## Economic Structure

1. Trump EPA under Administrator Lee Zeldin rolled back toxic chemical rules and fast-tracked pesticide approvals. Easing restrictions on hazardous chemicals, continuing dicamba use, and undoing PFAS limits shifted regulatory priorities toward industry interests over environmental and health protections. (7 Dec 2025)

2. Target Corporation experienced major stock decline and layoffs amid

boycotts over DEI rollbacks. Consumer backlash to Target's retreat from diversity commitments showed how market pressure can discipline corporate political stances and reshape employment decisions. (8 Dec 2025)

3. U.S. Census Bureau sought a three-year extension of the Monthly Wholesale Trade Survey. Continuing the wholesale trade survey preserved a key data series used for economic policymaking and private-sector planning. (8 Dec 2025)

4. Environmental Protection Agency set a pesticide residue tolerance for azoxystrobin on black pepper. Approving a specific fungicide tolerance for black pepper balanced agricultural trade needs with food safety standards under federal law. (8 Dec 2025)

5. Environmental Protection Agency tentatively approved a vessel sewage no-discharge zone in Virginia's Northern Neck. Finding adequate pump-out facilities cleared the way for Virginia to ban vessel sewage discharges, strengthening local water quality protections. (8 Dec 2025)

6. Food and Drug Administration launched the TEMPO pilot to support digital health devices. The pilot tied payment models to patient outcomes for digital health tools, potentially reshaping incentives and regulatory pathways in a growing medical technology sector. (8 Dec 2025)

7. Food and Drug Administration issued draft guidance for generic estradiol vaginal products. New bioequivalence guidance aimed to facilitate generic estradiol products, which could increase competition and lower costs for patients. (8 Dec 2025)

8. Food and Drug Administration revoked the COVID-19 emergency use authorization for Actemra after full approval. Ending Actemra's EUA once a licensed indication existed marked a transition from emergency to standard regulatory pathways for a key COVID-19 therapy. (8 Dec 2025)

9. General Services Administration finalized a reorganization of the Federal Travel Regulation. Streamlining federal travel rules aimed to reduce administrative burden and improve cost-effectiveness in government travel and relocation spending. (8 Dec 2025)

10. General Services Administration requested comment on extending lease proposal information collections. Seeking feedback on forms used to evaluate federal leases affected transparency and efficiency in how the government rents property from private lessors. (8 Dec 2025)

11. Noah Smith and cited researchers highlighted risks of an AI investment bubble and weak returns. Analyses warning that heavily leveraged AI firms may not generate sufficient returns, and that most adopters see no payoff, underscored systemic financial risks in a hyped sector. (8 Dec 2025)

12. Commodity Futures Trading Commission maintained a lighter

insider-trading regime for Kalshi prediction markets. Allowing prediction markets with limited enforcement against trading on non-public information raised concerns about manipulation as such markets intersect with news coverage. (8 Dec 2025)

13. Kalshi secured CFTC approval to expand event betting, including on elections. Regulatory clearance for large-scale election and policy betting created a fast-growing market whose signals can influence media narratives and public expectations. (8 Dec 2025)

14. House Select Committee on the Strategic Competition Between the U.S. and the Chinese Communist Party opposed the sale of NVIDIA H200 chips to China. The committee's warning that advanced AI chips could bolster China's military underscored congressional concern over tech exports that may erode U.S. strategic advantages. (8 Dec 2025)

15. Department of Justice unsealed a guilty plea in an AI chip smuggling case to China. The Operation Gatekeeper plea highlighted enforcement efforts to stop illicit transfers of high-end AI hardware deemed critical to military and intelligence capabilities. (8 Dec 2025)

16. Federal Communications Commission sought public comment on multiple information collections and spectrum-related data requirements. A series of PRA notices on business data services, experimental licenses, and spectrum operations aimed to balance regulatory oversight with paperwork burdens in communications markets. (9 Dec 2025; 10 Dec 2025; 12 Dec 2025)

17. Food and Drug Administration opened comment periods on food traceability, mammography standards, humanitarian use devices, and testosterone therapy. FDA's multiple information requests and guidance efforts sought to refine oversight of high-risk foods, imaging quality, rare-disease devices, and hormone therapy. (9 Dec 2025; 11 Dec 2025)

18. General Services Administration and partner agencies requested comment on Buy American and intellectual property reporting requirements in federal procurement. Reviewing data collections tied to domestic content rules and IP rights in contracts affected how federal purchasing supports U.S. industry and manages innovation. (11 Dec 2025; 12 Dec 2025)

19. Drug Enforcement Administration extended temporary Schedule I status for synthetic drugs CUMYL-PEGACLONE and MDMB-4en-PINACA. Continuing emergency scheduling of two synthetic cannabinoids maintained strict controls while the agency considers permanent classification, affecting criminal liability and research. (11 Dec 2025)

20. Environmental Protection Agency approved multiple state air quality implementation plans and emission limits. Final approvals for SIP revisions in Arizona, California, Ohio, South Carolina, Tennessee, and Connecticut

advanced enforcement of federal air standards and clarified state responsibilities. (11 Dec 2025)

21. Environmental Protection Agency opened pesticide registration review dockets and RCRA-related public participation information collections. Soliciting comment on pesticide reviews and hazardous waste definitions aimed to keep chemical regulation current while involving communities in environmental decisions. (11 Dec 2025)

22. Environmental Protection Agency sought renewal of trade secret claim procedures under community right-to-know laws. Reviewing how facilities claim confidentiality for chemical identities balanced corporate secrecy with public access to hazard information. (11 Dec 2025)

23. Food and Drug Administration determined regulatory review periods and safety status for several drugs, enabling generic competition and patent extensions. FDA rulings on review periods and reasons for withdrawal for products like FILSUVEZ, GRAFAPEX, BACTROBAN, DEMEROL, LUNELLE, and ZANTAC shaped patent life and generic entry. (10 Dec 2025; 12 Dec 2025)

24. Food and Drug Administration issued final guidance on promotional labeling for biosimilar and reference biologic products. Clarifying advertising standards for biologics and biosimilars aimed to ensure truthful promotion while supporting competition in high-cost drug markets. (10 Dec 2025)

25. Environmental Protection Agency sought comment on expanded public participation and solid waste definition information collections under RCRA. Extending data collections on public involvement and hazardous secondary materials helped maintain oversight of waste management and community input. (11 Dec 2025)

26. Environmental Protection Agency submitted a bilingual pesticide labeling information collection to OMB. Tracking adoption of bilingual labels implemented statutory requirements to make pesticide safety information accessible to Spanish-speaking users. (12 Dec 2025)

27. Federal Communications Commission removed obsolete telecommunications regulations via a direct final rule. Deleting outdated rules sought to modernize the regulatory code and reduce compliance costs, potentially affecting how communications markets are supervised. (12 Dec 2025)

28. Food and Drug Administration proposed allowing bemotrizinol as a sunscreen active ingredient. The proposed monograph amendment would expand available UV filters, influencing product formulation, competition, and consumer protection in the sunscreen market. (12 Dec 2025)

29. Food and Drug Administration invited stakeholders to participate in

Biosimilar User Fee Act reauthorization talks. Bringing patient and consumer groups into BsUFA negotiations aimed to shape future user fee structures that fund biosimilar review capacity. (12 Dec 2025)

30. Food and Drug Administration withdrew approval of 20 generic drug applications at sponsors' request. Removing unused ANDAs from the market clarified which generics remain legally marketable, affecting competition and supply for affected medicines. (12 Dec 2025)

31. Environmental Protection Agency published notice of availability for several environmental impact statements. Listing new EIS filings and comment deadlines supported public scrutiny of major federal projects with significant environmental and economic implications. (12 Dec 2025)

32. Noah Smith and cited sources described Botswana's vulnerability to synthetic diamond competition. Analysis of Botswana's diamond-dependent economy showed how technological shifts in synthetic gems threaten national revenues and underscore the need for diversification. (11 Dec 2025)

33. Aaltonen, Kaila, and Nix reported results from Finland's basic income experiment. Findings that basic income modestly raised income without changing employment or crime informed debates on social safety nets and their broader societal effects. (11 Dec 2025)

34. OpenAI and Andreessen Horowitz lobbied Congress to preempt state-level AI regulation. Industry efforts to secure a federal ban on state AI laws, though unsuccessful legislatively, highlighted concentrated corporate influence over the shape of emerging tech rules. (11 Dec 2025)

35. Jared Kushner and Middle Eastern sovereign wealth funds backed Paramount's hostile takeover bid for Warner Bros. Discovery. Foreign state-backed financing for a major U.S. media acquisition raised national security and influence concerns, especially given Kushner's ties to the administration. (9 Dec 2025)

36. Paramount Global claimed its WBD takeover structure avoided CFIUS jurisdiction despite large foreign equity. Structuring foreign investors without formal governance rights to sidestep CFIUS review tested the robustness of safeguards against foreign influence in strategic media assets. (9 Dec 2025)

37. The Trump Administration signaled potential intervention in competing Warner Bros. Discovery acquisition bids. Trump's expressed opposition to a Netflix-WBD deal while an ally-linked Paramount bid advanced raised ethical concerns about regulatory decisions favoring connected investors. (9 Dec 2025)

38. Popular Information reported that expiration of ACA subsidies could double premiums and cut coverage for millions. Analysis of looming subsidy lapses highlighted how federal policy choices could trigger sharp

premium hikes and coverage losses, especially in non-expansion states. (10 Dec 2025)

39. Leading the Future (LTF) formed a \$100 million AI-industry-backed group to influence 2026 elections. The new, lightly disclosed group aimed to boost pro-AI candidates, illustrating how concentrated tech wealth can shape electoral outcomes and regulatory debates. (11 Dec 2025)

## Information, Memory, and Manipulation

1. New York Times and other media reported on the Trump administration's 2025 National Security Strategy. The strategy's emphasis on sovereignty, reduced NATO commitments, and anti-immigration framing signaled a shift away from a rules-based order toward great-power spheres of influence. (6 Dec 2025; 8 Dec 2025; 9 Dec 2025)

2. White House solicited public submissions alleging media bias. Inviting citizens to report biased coverage risked creating a government-managed grievance channel that could be used to pressure or delegitimize critical outlets. (8 Dec 2025)

3. CNN and CNBC partnered with Kalshi to integrate prediction market data into news programming. Embedding betting odds into coverage blurred lines between journalism and speculation, potentially incentivizing sensationalism and enabling market manipulation. (8 Dec 2025)

4. Paramount Global aligned CBS News leadership with Trump-friendly figures amid a major merger bid. Hiring a Trump loyalist ombudsman and an anti-woke editor-in-chief suggested editorial shifts that could curry favor with regulators and the administration. (9 Dec 2025)

5. House Oversight Committee Democrats released thousands of photographs from Jeffrey Epstein's files. Publishing images of Epstein with powerful figures advanced transparency about his network while sparking disputes over selective disclosure and political motives. (11 Dec 2025; 12 Dec 2025)

6. Senator Ruben Gallego and Epstein survivors' counsel pressed DOJ to release Epstein files within a week. Deadlines and criticism over withheld records highlighted ongoing struggles to obtain full documentation of elite-linked abuse cases. (11 Dec 2025)

7. President Donald Trump claimed the economy deserved an "A-plus-plus-plus-plus-plus" grade despite public concern. Trump's exaggerated self-assessment of economic performance illustrated how leaders can use rhetoric to counteract unfavorable data and voter sentiment. (10 Dec 2025)

8. The Trump Administration planned to replace national park imagery

on passes with Trump's portrait. Rebranding park passes with the president's face, in defiance of a statutory photo contest, used public symbols for personal promotion and sparked legal challenge. (10 Dec 2025)

9. Network Contagion Research Institute reported artificial engagement boosting for extremist Nick Fuentes. Evidence that anonymous and foreign accounts inflated Fuentes's reach showed how coordinated manipulation can distort perceptions of support for extremist figures. (11 Dec 2025)

10. North Carolina Board of Elections decided to share detailed voting data. The board's plan to disseminate voter information raised concerns about privacy and how such data might be used to target or intimidate voters. (12 Dec 2025)

11. The 50501 Movement and collaborators released an archive of Trump's 2025 Truth Social posts. Documenting presidential posts, including AI-generated images and calls for prosecutions, created an independent record to counter potential deletion or revision of controversial content. (12 Dec 2025)

12. Heather Cox Richardson and other commentators linked historical struggles against fascism to current U.S. political trends. Historical analysis framed contemporary erosions of equality and democratic norms as part of a longer contest between hierarchical and democratic visions of government. (7 Dec 2025)

13. Media outlets and analysts reported on a media merger battle that could shift CNN's editorial stance. Coverage of a Paramount–Skydance bid for WBD, backed by Trump allies and foreign funds, highlighted risks of consolidating major news outlets under politically aligned ownership. (9 Dec 2025; 10 Dec 2025)

14. Federal Communications Commission adopted multilingual templates for Wireless Emergency Alerts. Standardizing multilingual alert templates improved equitable access to critical information during emergencies for non-English-speaking communities. (10 Dec 2025)

15. Congress passed a resolution condemning China's harassment of U.S.-based critics. The measure denouncing Chinese efforts to silence speech on U.S. soil affirmed congressional support for protecting domestic expression from foreign intimidation. (11 Dec 2025)

16. Popular Information exposed AI industry's \$100 million political strategy to shape AI regulation and elections. Reporting on LTF and lobbying for AI preemption illuminated how concentrated tech money seeks to steer both policy and electoral narratives around AI. (11 Dec 2025)



## CHAPTER 22

### **WEEK 48 (13 DEC 2025 – 19 DEC 2025): MEMORY AS INSTRUMENT**

*Law, force, and narrative tightened around the presidency, turning immigration, archives, and media into coordinated tools of control rather than constraint.*

This was a week marked by intense authoritarian consolidation. The Trump administration simultaneously expanded hard power—such as the Venezuela blockade, the order classifying fentanyl as a WMD, and the expansion of travel bans—and increased control over information, memory, and the civil service. Immigration enforcement and Supreme Court decisions increasingly favored racialized, discretionary authority, while DOJ and FBI resources were redirected against perceived ideological enemies like anti-ICE activists and former intelligence officials, instead of focusing on elite accountability, as seen in noncompliance with Epstein files and selective grant distribution. Regulatory agencies were aggressively captured or repurposed: the EPA weakened protections against carcinogens, the dismantling of NCAR advanced, and billions in university research funding were frozen, even as Trump's own media company pursued a fusion-energy merger under his regulatory oversight. Symbolic politics—such as biased presidential plaques, renaming the Kennedy Center, and constructing a triumphal arch—were funded and staged alongside material attacks on healthcare, LGBTQ+ rights, and immigrant protections. Congress showed pockets of resistance, including the ACA subsidy discharge petition and pressure for Epstein transparency, and courts occasionally checked executive overreach on immigration bonds and university funding. However, these efforts were overshadowed by struc-

tural moves that entrench executive impunity, politicize the bureaucracy, and normalize emergency-style national security framing for domestic policy.

## Power and Authority

1. President Trump oversaw release of a new National Security Strategy reframing immigration and alliances. The strategy elevated immigration and civilizational conflict as security threats and revived a hard-edged Monroe Doctrine, signaling a more unilateral, identity-driven use of U.S. power abroad. (13 Dec 2025)

2. The Trump Administration froze asylum decisions and halted immigration applications for Afghans and nationals of travel-ban countries. The freeze abruptly cut off legal pathways for thousands of immigrants and asylum seekers, expanding executive control over who can access U.S. protection and status. (13 Dec 2025)

3. President Trump signed an executive order designating illicit fentanyl and its precursors as weapons of mass destruction. Recasting fentanyl as a WMD allowed national-security and military tools to be deployed in domestic drug enforcement, blurring lines between policing and war powers. (15 Dec 2025; 19 Dec 2025)

4. President Trump expanded the travel ban to additional African and Middle Eastern countries and Palestinian document holders. The broader ban further restricted mobility for targeted nationalities and deepened a tiered system of access to the U.S. based on origin and perceived security risk. (16 Dec 2025; 17 Dec 2025)

5. President Trump ordered a naval blockade of Venezuelan oil tankers and labeled the Maduro government a terrorist organization. Designating a sovereign state as a terrorist entity and blockading its oil exports escalated U.S. coercive power, stretching terrorism frameworks and risking conflict without clear congressional authorization. (17 Dec 2025; 19 Dec 2025)

6. President Trump publicly floated the idea of serving a third presidential term and had aides praise it. By entertaining a third term and amplifying legal arguments that the 22nd Amendment is unclear, the White House normalized discussion of breaching constitutional term limits. (18 Dec 2025)

7. President Trump announced a one-time \$1,776 "warrior dividend" for service members funded from existing housing allowances. Repurposing congressionally appropriated housing funds into a branded cash bonus used the military payroll as a political tool while undermining long-term housing support. (17 Dec 2025; 18 Dec 2025)

8. President Trump signed executive orders reclassifying marijuana and directing expanded cannabis research. Rescheduling marijuana to facilitate research and easing access for medical uses shifted federal drug policy, modestly reducing criminalization and expanding executive influence over health regulation. (18 Dec 2025)

9. President Trump issued an executive order closing federal executive agencies on December 24 and 26, 2025. The closure order adjusted federal operations and pay around the holidays, illustrating presidential discretion over basic government service availability. (18 Dec 2025)

10. President Trump ordered government-wide adjustments to federal civilian and military pay rates for 2026. The pay order reset compensation structures across branches and services, affecting public-sector labor conditions and budget priorities. (18 Dec 2025)

11. President Trump issued an executive order setting an expansive national space superiority agenda. The directive framed space exploration and defense as arenas for U.S. dominance, committing national resources and security policy to long-term strategic projects. (18 Dec 2025)

12. The Trump Administration moved to dismantle the National Center for Atmospheric Research and cancel its grants. Targeting a major climate research hub for closure weakened federal scientific capacity on weather and climate risks, reducing expert input into policy decisions. (17 Dec 2025; 18 Dec 2025)

13. The Trump Administration announced plans to dismantle NCAR and redirect activities citing ideological concerns. Labeling core climate science work as "woke" and moving to shut it down signaled direct ideological control over which research the federal government supports. (17 Dec 2025)

14. The Trump Administration proposed seizing California land along the southern border for expanded military control. The proposal to convert state land into federal military zones along the border would extend military authority into civilian areas and override state preferences. (19 Dec 2025)

## **Institutions and Governance**

1. House Republican leadership advanced a healthcare plan that omitted extension of enhanced ACA tax credits. By excluding extended marketplace subsidies, House leaders set up a lapse in support that would raise premiums for millions, using legislative design to reshape access to health coverage. (13 Dec 2025)

2. House Speaker Mike Johnson blocked and delayed floor votes on

extending ACA premium subsidies despite majority support. Using procedural control to prevent a vote on widely supported subsidies showed how leadership can thwart majority will on core welfare policy. (15 Dec 2025; 17 Dec 2025; 18 Dec 2025)

3. Bipartisan House coalition used a discharge petition to force a future vote on extending ACA subsidies. Republicans joining Democrats to trigger a discharge petition demonstrated legislators using rare procedural tools to bypass leadership and secure a vote on health affordability. (17 Dec 2025; 18 Dec 2025)

4. U.S. Congress enacted the Secure Rural Schools Reauthorization Act of 2025. Reauthorizing Secure Rural Schools funding sustained federal support for rural education and infrastructure, reinforcing intergovernmental fiscal ties and local service capacity. (18 Dec 2025)

5. U.S. Congress enacted the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2026. The NDAA set nearly \$901 billion in defense policy and funding, including DEI rollbacks and new oversight demands on boat-strike footage, shaping civil-military relations and accountability. (18 Dec 2025)

6. House of Representatives passed a measure to restore federal employee union rights previously curtailed. The vote sought to reverse an earlier executive rollback of collective bargaining in federal agencies, reasserting legislative support for organized labor in the civil service. (15 Dec 2025)

7. Senate Democrats announced they would block civilian nominations until briefed on Epstein files release. Tying confirmation of nominees to compliance with a transparency law used Senate powers to pressure DOJ to release politically sensitive records. (16 Dec 2025)

8. House Oversight Democrats released additional photographs from Jeffrey Epstein's estate ahead of a DOJ deadline. Publishing new Epstein materials kept public and political pressure on DOJ to comply with statutory disclosure requirements about elite-linked crimes. (18 Dec 2025)

9. Department of Justice released only heavily redacted Epstein files despite a law requiring broad disclosure. By slow-walking and heavily redacting Epstein records beyond what the statute allows, DOJ appeared to defy a transparency mandate concerning powerful figures' misconduct. (18 Dec 2025; 19 Dec 2025)

10. U.S. District Court blocked the administration from withholding funding and imposing fines on the University of California. The ruling curtailed use of civil-rights investigations as a pretext to coerce universities into ideological changes by threatening massive financial penalties. (15 Dec 2025)

11. Federal courts repeatedly ruled against mandatory immigration deten-

tion policies that denied bond hearings. Nationwide decisions requiring bond hearings for many detained immigrants checked executive attempts to impose blanket detention without individualized review. (15 Dec 2025)

12. U.S. District Judge Paula Xinis and the Supreme Court ordered Kilmar Abrego Garcia's release and directed the government to facilitate his return. The rulings enforced procedural protections in a contested deportation case, underscoring judicial oversight of immigration enforcement and executive compliance with prior orders. (15 Dec 2025)

13. National Trust for Historic Preservation and allied plaintiffs filed lawsuits challenging Trump's demolition and expansion plans at historic federal buildings. The suits argued that the president bypassed required review and public input to alter major federal properties, testing legal limits on unilateral changes to shared civic spaces. (15 Dec 2025)

14. Department of Justice defended Trump's White House ballroom project in court on national security grounds. Invoking security to justify bypassing preservation and public-process requirements blurred the line between legitimate protection needs and shielding presidential building projects from scrutiny. (17 Dec 2025)

15. Georgia State Senate special committee investigated District Attorney Fani Willis over her prosecution of Trump. The inquiry into a local prosecutor handling a former president's election case highlighted how partisan state bodies can pressure independent legal actors. (17 Dec 2025)

16. Congressional Democrats demanded full video and legal justification for U.S. boat strikes in the eastern Pacific. Lawmakers criticized classified briefings that omitted unedited footage of strikes with civilian casualties, underscoring tensions over transparency and war powers. (17 Dec 2025)

17. Senator Andy Kim called for public hearings on Trump's threatened military actions against Venezuela. The demand for open hearings sought to subject potential foreign military escalation to democratic debate and congressional oversight. (17 Dec 2025)

18. Special Counsel Jack Smith testified to Congress about Trump's criminal scheme to overturn the 2020 election and sought public release of his deposition. Smith's evidence and push for transparency highlighted both the depth of alleged election subversion and congressional reluctance to air the findings publicly. (17 Dec 2025; 18 Dec 2025)

19. Department of Justice filed a court brief asserting it could lawfully direct federal grants only to Republican-led states. Arguing that partisan allocation of federal funds is constitutional signaled a willingness to weaponize fiscal tools against disfavored jurisdictions. (18 Dec 2025)

20. Supreme Court of the United States issued a ruling effectively legal-

izing racial profiling in immigration enforcement. The decision empowered ICE and CBP to conduct aggressive, race-based raids, reshaping constitutional protections for immigrants and communities of color. (18 Dec 2025)

21. Wisconsin jury convicted Judge Hannah Dugan of obstruction for helping an immigrant avoid ICE arrest. The conviction of a sitting judge for actions in her courthouse underscored heightened conflict between local judicial discretion and federal immigration enforcement. (19 Dec 2025)

22. Australian Classification Review Board overturned a ban on viewing Charlie Kirk shooting footage on social media. Reclassifying the video as viewable for adults balanced concerns over graphic content with recognition of its political and historical significance. (17 Dec 2025)

23. California state government banned legacy admissions at institutions receiving state funds. Ending preferential treatment for alumni and donor children at publicly supported universities aimed to make admissions more merit-based and equitable. (18 Dec 2025)

24. U.S. House of Representatives passed a bill criminalizing gender-affirming care for minors nationwide. Creating a federal felony for providing gender-affirming care to minors extended congressional power into medical decisions and targeted transgender youth and providers. (18 Dec 2025)

25. FCC Chair Brendan Carr told the Senate that the FCC is not independent and aligned it with the administration. Disavowing agency independence and scrubbing it from the mission statement signaled executive encroachment on a key communications regulator. (17 Dec 2025)

26. National Archives and Records Administration solicited public comments on proposed federal records disposition schedules. Inviting input on which records agencies may destroy or retain gave the public a role in shaping the documentary basis for future accountability. (15 Dec 2025)

27. National Archives and Records Administration announced a meeting of the State, Local, Tribal, and Private Sector Policy Advisory Committee on classified information. The open advisory meeting aimed to coordinate how non-federal entities handle classified information, affecting transparency and security practices across levels of government. (16 Dec 2025)

## Civil Rights and Dissent

1. Immigration and Customs Enforcement apprehended and detained U.S. citizens and demanded they carry immigration papers. Detaining citizens and treating them as undocumented blurred legal distinctions in enforcement, undermining civil liberties and equal protection. (14 Dec 2025)

2. Immigration and Customs Enforcement stopped Representative Ilhan Omar's son during a targeted operation against Somali communities. The stop, part of "Operation Metro Surge," raised concerns about racial profiling and the use of federal power to intimidate a minority community and its elected representative. (15 Dec 2025)

3. Hilda Ramirez Sanan filed a lawsuit alleging violent, warrantless detention by ICE agents. Claims that officers shattered car windows and seized a lawful resident and her citizen children without identifying themselves spotlighted alleged abuses in immigration enforcement. (15 Dec 2025)

4. Bucks County voters elected Danny Cisler sheriff on a platform of ending a 287(g) partnership with ICE. Replacing a sheriff who had deputized local officers as immigration agents signaled local resistance to entangling county policing with federal deportation efforts. (15 Dec 2025)

5. Department of Homeland Security launched an "ARRESTED: WORST OF THE WORST" website spotlighting alleged criminal "illegal aliens". The site selectively highlighted extreme cases while ICE data show most detainees lack criminal records, stoking fear and dehumanizing immigrants. (15 Dec 2025)

6. Cities and advocacy groups across the U.S. coordinated grassroots efforts to resist ICE raids and educate residents on their rights. Know-your-rights trainings, whistle distribution, and cross-city organizing aimed to protect immigrant communities from aggressive federal enforcement. (16 Dec 2025)

7. Durham City Council declared Durham a "Fourth Amendment workplace" requiring warrants for certain enforcement entries. The resolution sought to shield workers and immigrants from warrantless ICE intrusions into private spaces, reinforcing local constitutional protections. (17 Dec 2025)

8. Immigration and Customs Enforcement doubled arrests in North Carolina as part of a statewide campaign. The surge in arrests, often by agents in tactical gear in public spaces, heightened fear in Latino communities and strained trust in law enforcement. (17 Dec 2025)

9. Federal prosecutors in Texas charged 18 anti-ICE protesters as a terrorism cell after a detention center protest. Using terrorism statutes against demonstrators at an ICE facility risked criminalizing protest and chilling dissent around immigration policy. (18 Dec 2025)

10. American Civil Liberties Union of Minnesota sued DHS over alleged rights violations during ICE raids and protests. The suit claimed federal agents targeted observers and protesters, raising questions about retaliation against those documenting enforcement actions. (18 Dec 2025)

ii. Federal Bureau of Investigation opened domestic terrorism investigations into anti-ICE activity in at least 23 regions. Framing anti-fascist and anti-ICE organizing as potential terrorism under a Trump directive risked treating political opposition as a security threat. (19 Dec 2025)

12. National Immigrant Justice Center and partners challenged a CBP advisory pressuring unaccompanied children to self-deport. The lawsuit argued that threatening prolonged detention and sponsor prosecution coerced vulnerable minors into abandoning legal protections. (19 Dec 2025)

13. Department of Defense's TRICARE program finalized a policy excluding hormone therapy for gender dysphoria in minors. The exclusion removed coverage for transgender dependents in military families, narrowing healthcare rights for a vulnerable group tied to federal service. (18 Dec 2025; 19 Dec 2025)

14. House of Representatives passed a bill making gender-affirming care for minors a federal felony. Criminalizing providers of gender-affirming care nationwide would sharply restrict medical autonomy for transgender youth and their families. (18 Dec 2025)

15. Department of Defense and Congress linked TRICARE's exclusion of gender dysphoria care for minors to NDAA and executive actions. Embedding coverage limits for transgender dependents in defense policy intertwined civil rights restrictions with core military legislation. (18 Dec 2025)

16. National Union of the Homeless and allies organized Longest Night vigils to honor people who died from poverty. The vigils used public space and ritual to highlight homelessness and economic injustice, pressing for policy attention to basic social rights. (19 Dec 2025)

17. Indivisible and allied activists encouraged primary challenges to Democratic incumbents seen as too corporate or weak against Trump. The campaign sought to use intra-party elections to increase accountability and ensure representatives more strongly defend democratic norms. (19 Dec 2025)

18. National Union of the Homeless (Durham chapter) called for community participation in vigils and delegations on homelessness and poverty. Mobilizing residents to confront local officials about poverty aimed to translate remembrance into political pressure for policy change. (19 Dec 2025)

19. Department of Justice charged a Texas "antifa cell" with terrorism after a protest at an ICE detention center. Applying terrorism charges to a protest that included fireworks and an officer's shooting blurred lines between political activism and terrorism in federal law. (18 Dec 2025)

20. Federal and local law enforcement conducted aggressive immigration operations in Chicago neighborhoods using chemical agents. Video of officials mocking residents and using force in immigrant communities

underscored the intimidating nature of some enforcement tactics. (17 Dec 2025)

21. Federal agents and prosecutors pursued terrorism and domestic-terror investigations tied to anti-ICE activity nationwide. The combined use of terrorism frameworks and domestic-terror probes against immigration-related dissent risked normalizing extraordinary charges for protest. (18 Dec 2025; 19 Dec 2025)

## Economic Structure

1. Prairie Band Potawatomi Nation's KPB Services signed and then moved to exit a major ICE detention facility design contract. The \$29.9 million contract illustrated how federal detention infrastructure is outsourced, while tribal backlash highlighted ethical and sovereignty concerns around profiting from immigration enforcement. (13 Dec 2025)

2. The Trump Administration prioritized building a triumphal arch in Washington DC as a signature domestic project. Focusing federal attention on a monumental arch amid affordability and health crises showed public resources being steered toward symbolic glorification over pressing social needs. (14 Dec 2025)

3. The Trump Administration advanced a healthcare bill incentivizing AI in rural hospitals while cutting Medicaid by an estimated \$911 billion. Pairing tech incentives with deep Medicaid reductions restructured health financing in ways likely to reduce care for low-income and rural patients. (14 Dec 2025; 15 Dec 2025)

4. The Trump Administration proposed major cuts to Alaska's High Intensity Drug Trafficking Area funding. Reducing HIDTA support risked weakening coordinated drug enforcement and overdose prevention capacity in a high-need region. (15 Dec 2025)

5. Environmental Protection Agency proposed nearly doubling the formaldehyde exposure level deemed safe. Relaxing formaldehyde risk thresholds after industry lobbying would ease regulatory burdens on polluters while increasing potential cancer risks for the public. (15 Dec 2025; 19 Dec 2025)

6. Department of Veterans Affairs announced plans to cut up to 35,000 healthcare positions. Shrinking the VA workforce by about 10% shifted care away from public provision toward private options, potentially reducing access and continuity for veterans. (15 Dec 2025)

7. Stephen Miller sold MP Materials stock shortly after a favorable administration deal boosted its price. The well-timed sale raised conflict-of-interest

concerns about senior officials potentially profiting from policy decisions affecting specific companies. (14 Dec 2025)

8. President Trump pressed the Federal Reserve to cut interest rates further to boost asset values. Political pressure for looser monetary policy risked higher inflation while benefiting holders of financial assets, including the president's family. (14 Dec 2025)

9. Federal Communications Commission permanently debarred Q Link Wireless and Issa Asad from Lifeline and universal service programs. Removing entities convicted of fraud from subsidy programs aimed to protect public funds and maintain integrity in communications assistance for low-income users. (15 Dec 2025; 17 Dec 2025)

10. Federal Communications Commission rescinded a prior cybersecurity rulemaking and emphasized collaboration with carriers. Rolling back a misinterpreted cybersecurity initiative shifted the FCC toward a more voluntary, industry-friendly approach to protecting communications networks. (15 Dec 2025)

11. Federal Communications Commission sought extensive public comment on multiple information collections and wireless siting policies. The FCC's paperwork and siting notices affected how broadcasters, telecoms, and localities document compliance and expand broadband infrastructure. (15 Dec 2025; 18 Dec 2025)

12. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention submitted and sought comment on several information collection requests and overdose data projects. CDC's PRA submissions on formative research, project monitoring, and overdose data shaped how health agencies gather evidence to guide interventions. (15 Dec 2025)

13. Environmental Protection Agency released and sought comment on multiple pesticide risk assessments, registrations, and tolerances. EPA's actions on metrafenone, unregistered pesticide exports, new active ingredients, and crop uses governed how agricultural chemicals enter markets and affect health and ecosystems. (15 Dec 2025; 16 Dec 2025; 19 Dec 2025)

14. Drug Enforcement Administration extended Schedule I status for four synthetic cannabinoids and processed new controlled-substance import and manufacturing applications. Maintaining strict controls on certain synthetics while reviewing new importers and manufacturers shaped the legal drug supply chain and research environment. (16 Dec 2025; 19 Dec 2025)

15. Food and Drug Administration issued multiple guidances and determinations on drug and device safety reporting, recalls, and approvals. Updated FDA guidance on clinical safety reporting, cosmetics recalls, real-

world evidence, and specific products refined regulatory expectations and pathways for industry. (16 Dec 2025; 18 Dec 2025; 19 Dec 2025)

16. General Services Administration aligned Federal Management Regulation and acquisition reporting rules with deregulatory priorities. Streamlining management and transactional data reporting requirements altered how federal property and contracting are overseen, potentially reducing transparency burdens and some safeguards. (16 Dec 2025; 17 Dec 2025; 18 Dec 2025)

17. Occupational Safety and Health Administration extended OMB approvals for multiple workplace safety information collections. Renewing data requirements for fall protection, cranes, manlifts, silica, and butadiene standards maintained reporting obligations that underpin enforcement of worker safety rules. (17 Dec 2025)

18. Federal Communications Commission launched a new computer matching program to verify Lifeline and ACP eligibility. Automated cross-checks with state benefit data aimed to reduce fraud and ensure that communications subsidies reach eligible low-income households. (17 Dec 2025)

19. Environmental Protection Agency approved Arizona's PM<sub>2.5</sub> air quality plan and delegated enforcement authority to Louisiana and Oklahoma. Approving state plans and delegations shifted day-to-day enforcement of federal air standards to state agencies, affecting local control and capacity. (18 Dec 2025)

20. Federal Communications Commission held an open meeting to update robocall, low-power TV, and obsolete rules. The agenda targeted consumer protection from robocalls, clarified broadcaster obligations, and removed outdated regulations, adjusting the communications regulatory landscape. (18 Dec 2025)

21. Office of Federal Procurement Policy and partner agencies sought comment on contract audit and foreign-purchase reporting requirements. Extending data collections on contract records and foreign sourcing supported oversight of procurement integrity and compliance with Buy American and trade rules. (18 Dec 2025)

22. Michigan Public Service Commission and DTE Energy entered a regulatory fight over fast-tracking approval of a large data center project. DTE's request for an ex parte approval and the attorney general's push for a contested case highlighted tensions between corporate development, ratepayer protection, and climate law compliance. (18 Dec 2025)

23. The Trump Administration froze billions in federal research funding for universities. Halting research grants as part of an ideological higher-

education agenda threatened universities' financial stability and their role in independent knowledge production. (18 Dec 2025)

24. President Trump announced a new drug pricing program branded "Trump RX.gov". The initiative promised lower drug prices but lacked clear mechanisms, using presidential branding to claim credit for prospective cost relief. (18 Dec 2025)

25. Trump Media & Technology Group announced a multibillion-dollar merger with a speculative fusion energy company. Merging the president's media firm with an energy venture dependent on federal approvals raised acute conflict-of-interest concerns about policy being used to enrich a sitting leader. (18 Dec 2025; 19 Dec 2025)

26. U.S. Census Bureau sought comment on revisions to the American Community Survey and Puerto Rico Community Survey. Updating ACS and PRCS methods, including online response and race/ethnicity questions, will influence demographic data that underpins representation and funding decisions. (19 Dec 2025)

27. Environmental Protection Agency published notices of availability for several major environmental impact statements. Making EIS documents available for projects like pipeline crossings and military training informed public and stakeholder engagement on large federal actions. (19 Dec 2025)

28. Federal Communications Commission modified TV allotments by moving a channel from Fort Bragg to Cloverdale, California. Reassigning a broadcast channel altered local media markets and access to over-the-air television service in affected communities. (19 Dec 2025)

29. Food and Drug Administration announced OMB approval of multiple information collections across drug, device, and food programs. Maintaining these data collections ensured continued regulatory oversight of safety and compliance in several health-related industries. (19 Dec 2025)

30. The Trump Administration misrepresented inflation data that used shutdown-driven placeholders to claim housing costs were flat. Citing artificially zeroed housing components as proof of no inflation distorted economic reality and undermined trust in official statistics. (18 Dec 2025)

31. Trump Media & Technology Group announced another merger with a fusion energy company, spiking its stock despite weak fundamentals. The deal, reliant on Department of Energy decisions, highlighted how presidential business ventures can intersect with regulatory power and market speculation. (19 Dec 2025)

32. Indian government implemented sweeping labor law reforms to increase flexibility and social protections. Consolidating labor statutes,

easing hiring and firing, and expanding safety and social security aimed to attract investment while reshaping worker protections. (18 Dec 2025)

33. Indian government passed a financial reform package allowing full foreign ownership of insurance firms and overhauling capital markets. The reforms sought to channel domestic savings into productive investment and deepen financial markets as part of a long-term growth strategy. (18 Dec 2025)

34. Japanese government set ambitious FDI targets and created institutions to attract high-tech investment. Japan's FDI council, sectoral subsidies, and outreach to semiconductor and AI firms aimed to revitalize its industrial base and technological capacity. (17 Dec 2025)

35. Albanian legislature changed law to allow development on protected Sazan Island for a Kushner resort project. Granting "strategic investor" status to Kushner's firm to build in a protected area showed how private foreign interests can drive legal changes with environmental and EU-accession implications. (17 Dec 2025)

36. Affinity Partners and Serbian authorities abandoned a Trump Tower Belgrade redevelopment amid a corruption scandal. The collapse of a project tied to forged cultural-protection documents exposed risks when politically connected investors pursue deals involving heritage sites. (17 Dec 2025)

37. The Trump Administration imposed tariffs that significantly raised costs for small U.S. manufacturers. Tariff-driven input cost increases forced firms to absorb losses and delay hiring, undercutting stated goals of reshoring while harming local economies. (17 Dec 2025)

38. U.S. labor market lost approximately 41,000 jobs over two months. The reported job losses signaled emerging economic weakness that could strain public finances and social safety nets. (15 Dec 2025)

39. Tricolor Holdings executives were charged with large-scale fraud in subprime auto lending. The alleged billion-dollar scheme involving falsified loan data and double-pledged collateral highlighted vulnerabilities in financial oversight and consumer finance. (17 Dec 2025)

40. Dollar General and Family Dollar faced a congressional inquiry over widespread price discrepancies and forced arbitration. Lawmakers' demand for internal documents on shelf-versus-register pricing and arbitration practices targeted potential exploitation of low-income shoppers. (19 Dec 2025)

41. DTE Energy sought expedited, ex parte approval for a Michigan data center project. The utility's attempt to limit regulatory scrutiny over rate and climate impacts prompted legal pushback, illustrating conflicts between corporate timelines and public review. (18 Dec 2025)

## Information, Memory, and Manipulation

1. White House and President Trump installed partisan plaques under presidential portraits and removed Biden's image in favor of an autopen. Rewriting descriptions of recent presidents inside the White House and symbolically erasing Biden recast official history to reflect Trump's personal narrative. (17 Dec 2025; 18 Dec 2025)

2. Trump-appointed Kennedy Center board voted to rename the Kennedy Center after Trump despite lacking congressional authority. Attempting to rebrand a national cultural memorial without proper approval used institutional naming to elevate the sitting president's legacy. (17 Dec 2025; 18 Dec 2025)

3. President Trump attacked Rob Reiner posthumously and politicized his murder on social media. Using a critic's death to mock "Trump derangement syndrome" and score political points degraded public discourse and framed dissent as pathological. (15 Dec 2025; 16 Dec 2025)

4. Robert F. Kennedy Jr. as HHS Secretary spread false claims about the measles vaccine and removed CDC language debunking vaccine-autism links. Official anti-vaccine messaging and alteration of CDC content undermined scientific consensus and contributed to a measles epidemic. (14 Dec 2025; 15 Dec 2025)

5. RFK Jr. as HHS Secretary replaced all voting members of the CDC's vaccine advisory committee with anti-vaccine advocates and appointed a non-expert acting CDC head. Stacking key public health bodies with skeptics of vaccines politicized expert advice and threatened evidence-based immunization policy. (15 Dec 2025)

6. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention ended its recommendation that all U.S. newborns receive the hepatitis B vaccine at birth. Shifting from universal to selective newborn vaccination, under an RFK Jr.-influenced panel, risked higher hepatitis B transmission and reflected politicized health guidance. (17 Dec 2025)

7. Department of Homeland Security launched a sensational "ARRESTED: WORST OF THE WORST" immigration website promoted by the White House. Highlighting extreme immigrant crimes while omitting context from ICE data used selective information to portray immigrants as broadly dangerous. (15 Dec 2025)

8. The Trump Administration misrepresented inflation statistics that used shutdown placeholders to claim zero housing inflation. Citing distorted CPI components as evidence of economic success weaponized official data to mislead the public about cost-of-living pressures. (18 Dec 2025)

9. ABC News settled a defamation lawsuit with Trump by paying his library and legal fees. The sizable settlement over a relatively weak claim suggested major media outlets may capitulate to legal pressure from powerful political figures. (18 Dec 2025)

10. CBS and Paramount/Skydance settled a Trump lawsuit and restructured CBS News leadership with pro-Trump and anti-woke figures. The settlement and subsequent appointments of a pro-Trump ombudsman and Bari Weiss as editor-in-chief raised concerns about political influence over editorial independence. (18 Dec 2025)

11. Major broadcast networks aired a highly partisan Trump primetime address despite past refusals for similar Democratic speeches. Breaking precedent to carry an overtly political presidential speech suggested asymmetric media deference that can shape public narratives. (18 Dec 2025)

12. Department of Justice failed to fully comply with the Epstein Files Transparency Act and heavily redacted released documents. Partial, delayed, and redacted releases of Epstein records limited public understanding of elite abuse networks and signaled resistance to statutory transparency. (18 Dec 2025; 19 Dec 2025)

13. Federal Communications Commission sought comment on Wireless Emergency Alerts performance and corrected multilingual alert rule timelines. Evaluating and clarifying WEA data collection and implementation schedules affected how accurately and equitably emergency information reaches the public. (18 Dec 2025)

14. NC Representative Brenden Jones held a confrontational school board session mischaracterizing children's books as part of political theater. Using false claims about school library content to attack local officials exemplified culture-war tactics that distort educational debates. (19 Dec 2025)

15. Alliance Defending Freedom International expanded global spending on litigation and campaigns promoting conservative Christian legal agendas. Increased funding for cross-border cases aimed to reshape laws on religious freedom, LGBTQ+ rights, and gender norms beyond U.S. borders. (19 Dec 2025)

16. Food and Drug Administration opened comment on cigarette warning label information collection. Reviewing data needs for graphic cigarette warnings affected how strongly public health messages about smoking risks are communicated. (19 Dec 2025)

17. Federal Bureau of Investigation Director Kash Patel prematurely announced detention of a Brown University shooting suspect on social media. The erroneous announcement, later reversed, damaged investigative

credibility and highlighted risks when law enforcement communicates unverified claims. (14 Dec 2025; 17 Dec 2025)

18. President Trump used social media to blame Rob Reiner's death on his opposition to Trump. Politicizing a private tragedy to attack a critic further blurred boundaries between personal grief and partisan messaging. (15 Dec 2025; 16 Dec 2025)

19. Federal Communications Commission held an open meeting to strengthen robocall rules and update broadcasting regulations. Actions to curb robocalls and modernize low-power TV rules affected how citizens receive and trust communications from both private and public sources. (18 Dec 2025)

## CHAPTER 23

### **WEEK 49 (20 DEC 2025 – 26 DEC 2025): FILES AS INSTRUMENTS OF POWER**

*A week when transparency laws, courts, and agencies kept their formal shape while their inner workings bent toward secrecy, loyalty, and selective punishment.*

This week shows an executive increasingly willing to ignore legal limits while building a punitive, loyalty-based state. The strongest pressure aims at transparency and the integrity of records, as the Justice Department's failure to comply with the Epstein Files Transparency Act, along with selective redactions, document removals, and politically motivated messaging, collectively normalizes breaking the law to protect elites. Meanwhile, immigration enforcement expands into a semi-permanent system of mass detention and militarized control, featuring record ICE detentions, warehouse-style facilities, National Guard deployments to cities, and dehumanizing official rhetoric. Agencies are reshaped to serve ideological and economic allies: environmental and renewable energy programs are cut back in favor of fossil fuel interests; the VA is told to stop providing abortion care; DOJ sues to block local gun rules while dropping crypto investigations amid conflicts of interest. Civil service and diplomacy are hollowed out through politicized recalls and job cuts, while symbolic projects like the Trump-Kennedy Center and Trump-class battleships divert public funds toward personal glorification. Courts and some lawmakers push back—blocking Guard deployments, funding retaliation, and the Kennedy Center name change—but overall, there's a clear shift toward unaccountable, personalized executive power.

## Power and Authority

1. The Trump Administration canceled federal funding for offshore wind developments. The administration canceled \$679 million in offshore wind funding, weakening federal support for renewable energy infrastructure and shifting power toward fossil fuel interests over long-term public environmental goals. (20 Dec 2025)
2. Environmental Protection Agency under Trump terminated a \$7 billion solar program for low-income communities. Ending a large solar program for low-income communities reduced access to affordable clean energy and signaled federal withdrawal from policies that equalize energy access and climate resilience. (20 Dec 2025)
3. The Trump Administration blocked California's ban on new gas-powered car sales. Blocking California's gas-car phaseout overrode state climate policy choices, centralizing power in the federal executive and constraining states' ability to set higher environmental standards. (20 Dec 2025)
4. The Trump Administration issued a directive authorizing attacks on small boats from Venezuela. Authorizing lethal force against small boats linked to Venezuelan cartels expanded executive use of military-style power in migration and drug contexts, raising concerns about legal limits and accountability for cross-border violence. (20 Dec 2025)
5. Department of the Interior under Trump suspended five offshore wind projects citing national security. Suspending major offshore wind projects on dubious national security grounds, despite a prior court rebuke, showed executive willingness to stretch security claims to reshape the energy mix without transparent justification. (21 Dec 2025; 24 Dec 2025)
6. The Trump Administration expanded immigration enforcement infrastructure with a \$170 billion plan. Announcing a vast buildout of detention facilities, workplace raids, and deportation processing entrenched a long-term, highly coercive immigration apparatus with major implications for civil liberties and executive power. (22 Dec 2025)
7. Transportation Secretary Sean Duffy threatened to withhold federal funds from states issuing driver's licenses to non-citizens. Threatening to cut transportation funds to punish states over licensing policies used federal financial leverage to coerce state choices on immigrant integration, testing limits on conditional spending power. (22 Dec 2025)
8. Department of Veterans Affairs under Trump ended abortion and abortion counseling services for veterans. The VA's abortion ban, including in rape and incest cases, curtailed veterans' reproductive healthcare options

nationwide, using federal health infrastructure to enforce a restrictive moral policy. (22 Dec 2025; 23 Dec 2025)

9. President Donald Trump signed a law repealing remaining economic sanctions on Syria. Repealing the last Syria sanctions shifted U.S. leverage from economic pressure to engagement with a new government, altering how executive power is used to influence foreign regimes' behavior. (20 Dec 2025)

10. President Donald Trump announced construction of Trump-class battleships bearing his name. Ordering new battleships branded with the president's name blurred lines between national defense planning and personal glorification, embedding individual political branding into long-lived military assets. (22 Dec 2025; 23 Dec 2025)

11. President Donald Trump deployed thousands of National Guard troops to U.S. cities for immigration enforcement. Deploying Guard units to Democratic-led cities for immigration enforcement, even when courts limited roles, militarized domestic policy disputes and raised concerns about partisan use of security forces. (26 Dec 2025)

## **Institutions and Governance**

1. California legislature mandated a transition to 60% renewable electricity by 2030 and 100% by 2045. California's clean energy mandate strengthened state-level climate governance and demonstrated how subnational legislatures can pursue long-term public goods even amid hostile federal policy. (20 Dec 2025)

2. House Republicans and four GOP defectors forced a vote on extending Affordable Care Act premium tax credits. A small GOP bloc joining Democrats to compel a healthcare vote showed intra-party fractures and the capacity of rank-and-file legislators to challenge leadership on core social policy. (20 Dec 2025)

3. House Speaker Mike Johnson sent representatives home for the holidays amid disputes over tax credits and Epstein files. Adjourning the House during fights over healthcare subsidies and mandated records releases delayed oversight and policy decisions, using procedural control to sidestep contentious accountability issues. (20 Dec 2025)

4. Congress and President Donald Trump enacted the Epstein Files Transparency Act requiring full DOJ disclosure within 30 days. Passing and signing a law mandating rapid release of Epstein-related records created a statutory transparency obligation aimed at exposing elite wrongdoing and testing executive compliance with oversight. (21 Dec 2025)

5. Senate Democratic leader Chuck Schumer moved to authorize legal

action against DOJ over incomplete Epstein file releases. Schumer's planned resolution to sue DOJ for noncompliance with the Epstein law signaled the Senate's willingness to use litigation to enforce transparency and check executive defiance. (22 Dec 2025)

6. Representatives Jamie Raskin and Ted Lieu demanded a DOJ investigation into a Caribbean double-tap strike. Lawmakers' call to probe a suspected unlawful double-tap strike asserted congressional oversight over military operations and sought to enforce legal standards on the use of force. (22 Dec 2025)

7. Supreme Court of the United States blocked Trump's attempt to deploy National Guard troops for immigration enforcement in Illinois and Chicago. The Court's 6–3 decision upholding lower rulings against Guard deployments limited executive authority to use military forces domestically, reinforcing legal constraints and state sovereignty. (22 Dec 2025; 23 Dec 2025)

8. House Judiciary Committee leadership refused to release Jack Smith's testimony and deposition video on Trump's 2020 election conduct. Blocking public access to Jack Smith's detailed account of Trump's alleged election crimes limited transparency around high-level misconduct and constrained informed public oversight of Congress's inquiry. (20 Dec 2025; 24 Dec 2025)

9. Representative Thomas Massie accused the Justice Department of violating the Epstein transparency law through illegal redactions and delays. A Republican lawmaker's charge that DOJ broke a transparency statute underscored bipartisan concern that legal disclosure mandates were being ignored or manipulated by the executive branch. (21 Dec 2025; 24 Dec 2025)

10. Representative Joyce Beatty sued to block the Kennedy Center's renaming as the Trump-Kennedy Center. Beatty's lawsuit argued that renaming a congressionally designated memorial without legislative approval violated law, challenging executive and board overreach in altering national cultural institutions. (20 Dec 2025; 22 Dec 2025; 24 Dec 2025)

11. Federal judge Mary McElroy blocked White House cuts to homeland security grants for noncompliant immigration states. By halting \$230 million in grant reductions tied to immigration cooperation, the court curbed federal attempts to punish sanctuary jurisdictions through funding threats. (24 Dec 2025)

12. Federal Communications Commission renewed the World Radiocommunication Conference Advisory Committee charter and scheduled WRC-27 working group meetings. Renewing and convening the WRC advisory committee maintained structured, open expert input into international spectrum policy, supporting rule-based global communications governance. (22 Dec 2025)

13. Supreme Court of the United States was accused of enabling elite-favoring outcomes in anti-discrimination and admissions rulings. Commentary on recent Supreme Court decisions limiting race-conscious admissions and shaping discrimination enforcement highlighted concerns that judicial doctrine may entrench perceptions of unfairness in key institutions. (22 Dec 2025)

14. Department of Justice under Attorney General Pam Bondi was accused of judge shopping and leaking grand jury information in the Brennan case. Allegations that DOJ steered cases to favorable judges and leaked grand jury material suggested politicization of prosecutorial strategy and erosion of neutral legal process. (22 Dec 2025)

15. Department of Justice under Attorney General Pam Bondi sued Washington DC over its ban on AR-15-style weapons. DOJ's lawsuit challenging DC's assault-weapons ban used federal power to preempt local gun regulation, raising questions about central control over public safety policy. (22 Dec 2025)

16. Federal judge James Boasberg ordered the Trump administration to return or allow court challenges by Venezuelans deported to El Salvador's megaprison. Requiring remedies for 137 illegally deported Venezuelans asserted judicial authority over executive removal practices and reinforced due process protections for noncitizens. (22 Dec 2025)

17. Federal judge blocked DOJ's unlawful seizure of attorney-client communications in the Comey case. A ruling that DOJ improperly seized privileged materials in a failed prosecution, and DOJ's delay in complying, highlighted judicial checks on prosecutorial overreach and competence. (26 Dec 2025)

18. House of Representatives passed a bill to restore collective bargaining rights for federal workers. The House vote to reverse Trump-era limits on federal unions sought to rebuild protections for public servants and counter executive efforts to weaken organized labor in government. (25 Dec 2025)

19. Federal Communications Commission initiated multiple information collection reviews and spectrum-related rulemakings. FCC notices on litigation cost accounting, network equipment rules, pole attachments, and cable rate oversight reflected routine regulatory housekeeping that shapes compliance burdens and infrastructure investment. (22 Dec 2025)

20. Food and Drug Administration issued guidance and information collection rules for drug orders and medical device surveillance. FDA's dispute-resolution guidance and postmarket surveillance data request clarified procedures for resolving scientific disagreements and monitoring device safety, reinforcing technocratic oversight structures. (23 Dec 2025)

21. General Services Administration sought comment on reinstating its Ombudsman Inquiry information collection. Reviving data collection on vendor inquiries aimed to improve procurement processes and responsiveness, modestly strengthening feedback loops in federal contracting. (23 Dec 2025)

22. Occupational Safety and Health Administration and Department of Energy transferred safety oversight at Oak Ridge parcels to Tennessee's state agency. Shifting workplace safety jurisdiction for privatized DOE land to Tennessee's regulator clarified federal-state roles while committing to radiation exposure limits for workers. (22 Dec 2025)

## Civil Rights and Dissent

1. California Community Foundation and partner institutions launched the "Am I Next?" public art project protesting ICE raids in Los Angeles. Projecting large portraits and stories of those affected by raids used public art to contest aggressive immigration enforcement and highlight its chilling effect on constitutional rights. (20 Dec 2025)

2. Freedom of the Press Foundation reported a sharp rise in violence against journalists covering immigration protests. Documenting 170 assaults on journalists in 2025, often at protests against Trump immigration policies, showed growing physical risks for reporters and a hostile environment for watchdog coverage. (23 Dec 2025)

3. 50501 Movement and Women's March announced the nationwide Free America Walkout protest for January 20, 2026. Calling for coordinated walkouts from work, school, and home aimed to mobilize mass, nonviolent resistance against perceived authoritarian practices and demonstrate public capacity for collective action. (22 Dec 2025; 26 Dec 2025)

4. U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement detained record numbers of immigrants, many without criminal records. ICE's record 68,400 detainees and hundreds of thousands of arrests and deportations, often of non-criminals, reflected a punitive enforcement model that heavily burdens immigrant communities. (22 Dec 2025)

5. U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement planned to detain up to 80,000 immigrants in warehouse-like facilities. Plans for massive warehouse detention complexes, likened by leadership to a logistics system, underscored the scale and dehumanizing nature of the administration's carceral approach to migration. (24 Dec 2025)

6. U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement celebrated deportations on Christmas Day in official communications. ICE's holiday posts boasting of

“Christmas deportations,” amplified by Trump, normalized punitive enforcement as a point of pride and deepened stigma against migrants. (25 Dec 2025)

7. U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement detained Louisiana nursing graduate Vilma Palacios for months despite no criminal record. Palacios’s prolonged detention amid poor conditions illustrated how asylum seekers and long-term residents can be swept into harsh enforcement systems despite pending legal claims and clean records. (21 Dec 2025)

8. U.S. immigration authorities deported Lucía Pedro Juan to Guatemala while her detained husband was dying in U.S. custody. Deporting a detainee’s spouse before she could see her dying husband highlighted the human costs of rigid enforcement and family separation practices within detention systems. (24 Dec 2025)

9. Federal courts blocked ICE from re-detaining Kilmar Abrego Garcia and ordered due process protections for Venezuelans. Judicial orders limiting re-detention and requiring access to courts for deported Venezuelans showed courts acting as a counterweight to executive overreach in immigration enforcement. (22 Dec 2025)

10. Vice President J.D. Vance declared that the United States is a Christian nation at a major conservative conference. Framing the U.S. as a Christian nation at a high-profile event challenged constitutional norms of religious neutrality and signaled support for privileging one faith in public life. (22 Dec 2025)

11. The Trump Administration and ICE leadership used demeaning rhetoric urging migrants to self-deport in official holiday messaging. A White House meme telling migrants to “self-deport before Christmas,” echoed by ICE, used state platforms to mock vulnerable groups, reinforcing a hierarchy of belonging. (24 Dec 2025)

12. U.S. security forces and FBI leadership deprioritized investigations into far-right extremist group the Base. Shifting FBI resources away from a neo-Nazi group advocating insurgency raised fears that violent extremism aligned with anti-government narratives would face reduced scrutiny. (22 Dec 2025)

## Economic Structure

1. Dollar General agreed to a \$15 million settlement over price-gouging claims. Settling multi-state suits over overcharging customers and adding pricing audits modestly strengthened consumer protections and signaled that large retailers can face financial consequences for deceptive practices. (20 Dec 2025)

2. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention submitted the GAIN HIV testing study for OMB review. CDC's move to evaluate point-of-care HIV tests through formal review channels reflected ongoing investment in public health research within existing regulatory constraints. (22 Dec 2025)

3. Drug Enforcement Administration processed multiple controlled substance manufacturing and import applications. DEA notices on bulk manufacturing and import of controlled substances for research and analysis balanced scientific and commercial needs with regulatory controls on potentially dangerous drugs. (22 Dec 2025)

4. Drug Enforcement Administration scheduled two synthetic opioids as Schedule I substances. Placing new synthetic opioids into Schedule I imposed strict controls to curb abuse, aligning domestic drug policy with international obligations and public health concerns. (23 Dec 2025)

5. Federal Communications Commission reinstated vacant FM allotments and set procedures for a major 5G spectrum auction. Adjusting FM channel allocations and finalizing AWS-3 auction rules shaped future media access and wireless competition, influencing who can enter and profit from key communications markets. (23 Dec 2025)

6. Food and Drug Administration advanced postmarket surveillance data collection for medical devices. Requiring manufacturers to submit surveillance plans and reports aimed to detect device risks after approval, reinforcing regulatory oversight that protects patients while imposing compliance costs. (23 Dec 2025)

7. The Trump Administration announced resumption of wage garnishment for defaulted student loan borrowers. Restarting aggressive wage garnishment for student debtors shifted financial risk onto individuals, potentially deepening economic precarity for millions while strengthening federal collection power. (22 Dec 2025)

8. Media companies and universities implemented diversity-focused hiring practices affecting white male applicants. Reported hiring patterns at major outlets and universities sparked debate over whether diversity initiatives were consistent with anti-discrimination law and individual fairness in labor markets. (22 Dec 2025)

9. Department of Justice under Deputy Attorney General Todd Blanche ended crypto company investigations while holding significant personal crypto investments. Halting crypto probes amid undisclosed personal holdings raised conflict-of-interest concerns, suggesting that enforcement decisions in a volatile sector may have been shaped by officials' financial stakes. (22 Dec 2025)

10. The Trump Administration celebrated large reductions in federal civil

service employment. Boasting about eliminating hundreds of thousands of government jobs signaled a deliberate shrinking of state capacity for emergency management, data, and public health, with economic and governance consequences. (26 Dec 2025)

ii. European Union policymakers considered tariffs, export subsidies, joint ventures, and Buy European rules to counter Chinese imports. EU debates over protectionist tools to address the “Second China Shock” illustrated how advanced economies may restructure trade rules and industrial policy to defend domestic production and jobs. (24 Dec 2025)

## **Information, Memory, and Manipulation**

i. U.S. Department of Justice under Attorney General Pam Bondi released only a partial, heavily redacted set of Epstein files despite a legal deadline. DOJ’s limited, redacted releases, missed deadline, and removal of some posted files defied a transparency statute and fueled suspicion that disclosures were curated to protect certain elites. (20 Dec 2025; 21 Dec 2025; 22 Dec 2025; 23 Dec 2025; 24 Dec 2025; 25 Dec 2025; 26 Dec 2025)

2. U.S. Department of Justice removed and later restored Epstein-related files and photos, including images of Donald Trump. Taking down at least 16 Epstein files, including a Trump photo, then restoring some after outcry, showed active curation of politically sensitive records under the guise of victim protection. (20 Dec 2025; 21 Dec 2025; 22 Dec 2025)

3. U.S. Department of Justice released additional Epstein document batches with disclaimers about unverified or false claims. Subsequent document dumps, including claims about Trump’s flights and a fake Epstein–Nassar letter, came with warnings about inaccuracies, complicating public understanding and enabling selective narrative framing. (20 Dec 2025; 22 Dec 2025; 23 Dec 2025)

4. Former special counsel Jack Smith urged public release of his testimony on Trump’s 2020 election conduct. Smith’s call to publish his testimony about Trump’s alleged election crimes highlighted internal resistance to secrecy and the importance of public access to information on attempted subversion. (20 Dec 2025; 24 Dec 2025)

5. Bill Clinton and other critics publicly condemned DOJ’s opaque handling of Epstein records. High-profile criticism that DOJ was protecting someone by withholding most Epstein documents underscored how secrecy around elite-linked crimes erodes trust in neutral law enforcement. (23 Dec 2025)

6. CBS News leadership under Bari Weiss pulled or postponed a vetted 60

Minutes segment on Trump-era deportations to El Salvador's megaprison. Yanking a completed investigation into abusive deportations, which then aired abroad, suggested political pressure or self-censorship at a major outlet on coverage of current government abuses. (21 Dec 2025; 23 Dec 2025)

7. President Donald Trump attacked the New York Times as a national security threat in a social media post. Labeling a leading newspaper a national security threat escalated delegitimization of critical media and framed independent reporting as dangerous to the state. (22 Dec 2025)

8. Freedom of the Press Foundation and observers linked rising violence against journalists to anti-media rhetoric from Trump and allies. Analyses tying increased assaults on reporters to hostile official rhetoric highlighted how elite speech can foster an environment where attacks on the press become more likely. (23 Dec 2025)

9. Trump White House took control of DOJ social media accounts and used them to insult reporters. Centralizing DOJ communications under White House direction and using them for partisan attacks blurred institutional boundaries and turned official channels into tools of political messaging. (24 Dec 2025)

10. President Donald Trump made false claims in an economy speech and promoted a conspiracy video about COVID-19 and the 2020 election. Spreading disinformation about economic conditions and alleging COVID was unleashed to steal the 2020 election reinforced false narratives that undermine trust in both governance and electoral legitimacy. (20 Dec 2025; 25 Dec 2025)

11. President Donald Trump called for prosecution of former President Barack Obama without presenting evidence. Urging criminal charges against a predecessor absent substantiated claims framed political rivalry as criminality, normalizing the idea of using law enforcement against opponents. (25 Dec 2025)

12. President Donald Trump suggested Rob Reiner's death was linked to his political opposition. Implying that a critic's death was politically motivated blurred fact and insinuation, contributing to a conspiratorial information climate around opponents of the president. (20 Dec 2025)

13. The Trump Administration and allied agencies removed climate information, fired scientists, and backed fossil fuels over renewables. Dismantling environmental rules, suppressing climate data, and favoring fossil projects over renewables reshaped the knowledge base available to the public and policymakers on climate risks. (26 Dec 2025)

14. Department of Justice inserted unrelated or misleading materials into the Epstein files release. Including a misattributed Clinton photo and other

unrelated items in the Epstein release muddied the evidentiary record and risked weaponizing disclosure to smear specific figures. (21 Dec 2025)

15. Department of Justice acknowledged discovering about 1.2 million previously unreviewed Epstein-related documents. The late revelation of a massive trove of unreviewed records underscored chaotic or obstructive archival practices that delay accountability in a major elite-abuse case. (25 Dec 2025)

16. Department of Justice and FBI confirmed that a purported Epstein letter to Larry Nassar was fake. Publicly debunking a forged letter in the released files showed the need for careful verification of sensational documents to prevent misinformation from distorting public understanding. (23 Dec 2025)

17. CBS News and Canadian broadcaster enabled the pulled deportation segment to air abroad and circulate online. The segment's eventual airing outside the U.S. illustrated how cross-border media can partially circumvent domestic editorial suppression, though with reduced domestic reach and impact. (23 Dec 2025)

18. State Department under Secretary Marco Rubio imposed visa restrictions on figures tied to a so-called global censorship-industrial complex. Targeting foreign actors over alleged censorship practices used immigration tools to shape global information norms and signaled U.S. willingness to punish perceived threats to free expression. (23 Dec 2025)



## **CHAPTER 24**

### **WEEK 50 (27 DEC 2025 – 2 JAN 2026): CONSOLIDATION AS GOVERNANCE**

*With the clock frozen, the administration deepened its use of law, security, and narrative to personalize power and stratify rights without new formal shocks.*

This week highlights an executive-focused system increasingly willing to use law, security forces, and cultural institutions as tools of political power. Immigration enforcement is being industrialized and ideologized—through denaturalization quotas, warehouse detention, and a \$100 million ICE recruitment campaign—while courts sporadically push back, as seen in the TikTok streamer dismissal and the CFPB funding order. Trump's retaliatory vetoes of unanimously passed water and Everglades bills, along with selective punishment of Colorado and tribal interests, demonstrate federal power being weaponized against disfavored regions. The Kennedy Center bylaw changes and renaming, together with background-check shortcuts for a border czar, emphasize patronage and symbolic dominance over independent governance. Information manipulation is overt: censorship of investigative reporting, visa bans on anti-disinformation figures, and repeated presidential disinformation campaigns. Meanwhile, the Justice Department's opaque handling of Epstein files and extensive but delayed document reviews deepen mistrust of elite accountability. State and civil society responses—climate superfund laws, anti-gerrymandering marches, Block the Bombs advocacy—signal pockets of democratic resistance, but the overall pressure this week heavily favors entrenching executive impunity, stratified citizenship, and chaotic, retaliatory governance.

## Power and Authority

1. President Donald Trump urged Republican senators to eliminate the Senate filibuster. Trump's push to scrap the filibuster would weaken minority-party leverage in the Senate, making it easier for a simple majority to pass sweeping laws and concentrate legislative power. (27 Dec 2025)
2. Indivisible mobilized the public to press the Senate to block unauthorized attacks on Venezuela. The call for Senate action sought to reassert Congress's war powers and prevent unilateral executive military action, reinforcing checks on presidential use of force. (27 Dec 2025)
3. President Donald Trump vetoed a bipartisan clean water bill for Colorado. By vetoing unanimously passed drinking water legislation apparently tied to political grievances, Trump used veto power in a retaliatory way that jeopardized public health and undercut bipartisan governance. (31 Dec 2025; 1 Jan 2026)
4. President Donald Trump vetoed a bill funding an Everglades project benefiting the Miccosukee Tribe. The veto blocked environmental protection and tribal interests on stated ideological grounds, signaling willingness to wield executive power against disfavored communities and court rulings. (1 Jan 2026)
5. President Donald Trump asserted personal control over immigration, criminal law, and forcible renditions. Claims that the president personally directs immigration and criminal enforcement, including renditions, point to erosion of institutional checks and concentration of coercive power in the executive. (2 Jan 2026)
6. President Donald Trump threatened military action against Iran over protest repression. Trump's public threat of intervention in Iran, made outside formal processes, risked escalating conflict and showcased personalized use of military signaling in foreign policy. (1 Jan 2026; 2 Jan 2026)

## Institutions and Governance

1. U.S. House of Representatives censured Representative Al Green for interrupting Trump during a joint session. The censure punished a member's floor speech against the president, illustrating how disciplinary tools can be used to chill outspoken legislative dissent without removing formal voting rights. (27 Dec 2025)
2. U.S. House of Representatives passed a resolution disapproving Representative Chuy Garcia's retirement timing. The resolution condemned Garcia's alleged maneuvering to aid a successor, signaling congressional will-

ingness to police perceived election manipulation within its own ranks. (27 Dec 2025)

3. Tennessee House of Representatives expelled Justin Pearson and Justin Jones for leading a gun policy protest. The expulsions of lawmakers for floor protest over gun violence showed a state legislature using its removal power against dissenting members, raising concerns about representation and protest rights. (2 Jan 2026)

4. U.S. House Judiciary Committee held testimony and released a transcript from former special counsel Jack Smith. Smith's testimony and deposition detailed evidence against Trump and affirmed prosecutorial independence, providing congressional oversight of high-level criminal investigations involving a former president. (31 Dec 2025)

5. Federal district court granted Imran Ahmed a temporary restraining order against detention. The TRO protected an anti-disinformation advocate from government detention while his suit proceeds, underscoring judicial capacity to check executive actions affecting critics. (29 Dec 2025)

6. Federal district court dismissed with prejudice an indictment against TikTok streamer Carlitos Ricardo Parias. The court threw out charges over alleged assault on federal agents after finding due process violations, reinforcing constitutional protections in immigration-related prosecutions. (29 Dec 2025)

7. Judge Amy Berman Jackson ordered the administration to continue funding the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau. By compelling continued CFPB funding despite executive resistance, the ruling defended Congress's creation of an independent consumer watchdog against de facto defunding. (30 Dec 2025)

8. U.S. Court of Appeals allowed the administration to end Medicaid funding for Planned Parenthood in 22 states and DC. The appellate decision enabled a statutory provision cutting Medicaid reimbursements to Planned Parenthood, curbing access to reproductive care and reflecting ideological influence on health funding. (31 Dec 2025)

9. U.S. Department of Justice undertook a large-scale review of over 5 million Jeffrey Epstein documents. DOJ's massive, delayed review of Epstein records, far exceeding earlier estimates, raised questions about transparency, resource allocation, and potential shielding of powerful figures. (31 Dec 2025)

10. U.S. Department of Justice acknowledged millions of additional undisclosed Epstein-related documents. The late acknowledgment of roughly five million more Epstein documents fueled congressional accusations of unlawful withholding and deepened mistrust in DOJ's handling of elite-linked crimes. (1 Jan 2026)

ii. National Links Trust had its lease to manage Washington DC public golf courses terminated by the administration. Ending the public-private lease without a clear successor plan disrupted public amenities and raised concerns about contractual stability and potential self-dealing in federal property decisions. (1 Jan 2026)

12. Kennedy Center Board of Trustees changed bylaws to restrict voting to Trump-appointed trustees and approved renaming to include Trump. Concentrating voting power in Trump appointees and renaming a congressionally chartered arts institution around the sitting president blurred lines between public governance and personal glorification. (31 Dec 2025)

13. EPA Local Government Advisory Committee had its charter renewed and sought new local government members. Renewing the LGAC and recruiting members preserved a formal channel for local input into federal environmental policy, supporting multi-level governance and representation. (2 Jan 2026)

14. EPA and Oklahoma Department of Environmental Quality finalized delegation of certain hazardous air pollutant standards to Oklahoma. Delegating NESHAP enforcement to Oklahoma expanded state control over air quality regulation, with implications for local accountability and consistency of federal protections. (2 Jan 2026)

15. EPA revoked a 2024 rule on reclassification of major pollution sources under the Clean Air Act. By restoring a more flexible 2020 standard after congressional disapproval of the 2024 rule, EPA shifted hazardous air pollutant regulation in a direction favored by industry, affecting environmental safeguards. (2 Jan 2026)

16. EPA published a notice of availability for recent Environmental Impact Statements. Making EIS documents and EPA comments publicly available, including for a major solar project, supported transparency and public participation in federal environmental decisions. (2 Jan 2026)

17. EPA approved revisions to Colorado's air plan procedural rules. Approving Colorado's administrative updates to its air plan ensured state procedures remained aligned with federal Clean Air Act requirements, maintaining regulatory clarity. (2 Jan 2026)

18. EPA finalized revisions to the Taconite Federal Implementation Plan for Michigan and Minnesota. New NOx and SO<sub>2</sub> limits and reporting rules for taconite plants tightened industrial emission controls, reinforcing federal authority to enforce air quality standards. (2 Jan 2026)

19. EPA approved South Carolina's regional haze plan. Endorsing South Carolina's haze plan locked in state commitments to reduce emissions

affecting visibility in protected areas, illustrating cooperative federalism in environmental governance. (30 Dec 2025)

20. EPA granted a no-migration variance for hazardous waste disposal at Clean Harbors Lone Mountain. Allowing an exception to land disposal restrictions conditioned on no waste migration adjusted enforcement of hazardous waste rules, balancing industry flexibility with environmental risk. (30 Dec 2025)

21. EPA corrected an editorial error in federal fuel regulations. Technical corrections to fuel regulation text improved legal clarity, which is important for consistent enforcement and regulated entities' compliance. (31 Dec 2025)

22. National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health began evaluating a petition for Special Exposure Cohort status for United Nuclear workers. NIOSH's review could extend compensation to a class of nuclear workers, reflecting institutional mechanisms for redressing historic occupational harms. (30 Dec 2025)

23. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention announced a meeting of the Advisory Board on Radiation and Worker Health subcommittee. The open advisory meeting on radiation and worker health procedures maintained expert and public input into compensation and safety standards for exposed workers. (29 Dec 2025)

24. Occupational Safety and Health Administration granted permanent variances for compressed-air tunneling projects in DC and Ohio. OSHA's variances for two tunneling projects modified standard safety rules, illustrating how regulators adjust protections in response to specialized industrial practices. (29 Dec 2025)

25. Occupational Safety and Health Administration expanded recognition of DEKRA Certification Inc. and UL LLC as testing laboratories. By broadening NRTL scopes for DEKRA and UL, OSHA increased third-party capacity to certify product safety, supporting enforcement of workplace and consumer standards. (31 Dec 2025)

26. Occupational Safety and Health Administration sought comment on extending information collections for rigging equipment and training grants. Extending data collection for rigging safety and the Susan Harwood Training Grant Program preserved oversight of workplace hazards and grant performance. (31 Dec 2025)

27. Nemko North America, Inc. applied for expansion of OSHA Nationally Recognized Testing Laboratory status. Nemko's bid to test additional standards, subject to public comment, reflected procedural checks on private entities' roles in federal safety certification. (31 Dec 2025)

28. Federal Communications Commission requested public comment on

several information collection practices. FCC notices on discrimination complaint data and tariff review plans invited scrutiny of how regulatory data are gathered, affecting transparency and administrative burden. (29 Dec 2025; 30 Dec 2025)

29. U.S. Census Bureau sought OMB clearance for continued questionnaire pretesting research. Renewing authority for survey pretesting supported the quality of federal statistics, which underpin fair representation and policy design. (30 Dec 2025)

30. Transportation Security Administration revised its pipeline security information collection and sought public comment. Updating data requirements for pipeline security and cybersecurity oversight affected how critical infrastructure operators are monitored and held accountable. (2 Jan 2026)

31. General Services Administration updated federal mileage reimbursement rates and minimal value for foreign gifts. Adjusting travel reimbursements and the threshold for reportable foreign gifts maintained statutory compliance and transparency in federal employee benefits and ethics rules. (2 Jan 2026)

32. North Carolina General Assembly planned new tax cuts for wealthy individuals and corporations despite budget delays. The planned cuts, expected to worsen budget shortfalls and strain childcare and healthcare, illustrated how fiscal choices can weaken public services and social infrastructure. (2 Jan 2026)

33. New York and Vermont legislatures enacted climate superfund laws requiring polluters to fund resilience and emissions cuts. These state laws shifted climate costs onto major emitters, demonstrating subnational innovation in environmental accountability despite federal opposition. (1 Jan 2026)

34. North Carolina Select Committee on Oversight and Reform attacked the Chapel Hill School District in an oversight campaign. The committee's actions, seen as part of a broader effort to undermine public education, highlighted how legislative oversight can be used to pressure school systems. (2 Jan 2026)

## Civil Rights and Dissent

1. Immigration and Customs Enforcement detained and deported Oregon vineyard manager Moises Sotelo. Sotelo's deportation disrupted his family and local business, illustrating how aggressive immigration enforcement can destabilize communities and livelihoods. (27 Dec 2025)

2. Immigration enforcement officers forcibly removed immigrants from cars and courthouse hallways. Reports of immigrants being seized in public

and judicial spaces highlighted due process concerns and the chilling effect on accessing courts and services. (27 Dec 2025)

3. Indivisible organized public comments opposing administration policies targeting trans youth. The campaign mobilized civic participation to resist policies seen as undermining transgender rights, reflecting civil society's role in defending vulnerable groups. (27 Dec 2025)

4. Department of Justice and USCIS prioritized and dramatically expanded denaturalization case referrals. Guidance to generate 100–200 denaturalization cases per month signaled a shift toward systematically challenging naturalized citizens' status, heightening insecurity for immigrant communities. (30 Dec 2025)

5. USCIS paused immigration proceedings for nationals of 19 travel-ban countries. Halting naturalization ceremonies and green-card interviews for listed nationalities, justified on security grounds, effectively froze many immigrants' paths to status based on origin. (30 Dec 2025)

6. Federal magistrate judge ordered DC pipe bomb suspect Brian Cole Jr. held in pretrial detention. Detaining a January 5 pipe bomb suspect pending trial underscored the judiciary's role in addressing threats tied to the Capitol attack while balancing public safety and rights. (2 Jan 2026)

7. Federal court held a detention hearing for DC pipe bomb suspect Brian Cole Jr. The hearing weighed Cole's mental health and risk factors, reflecting procedural safeguards even in politically charged domestic terrorism cases. (30 Dec 2025)

8. Immigration and Customs Enforcement planned to expand detention capacity using warehouse-style facilities near logistics hubs. ICE's move toward large warehouse detention centers, backed by long-term funding, industrialized immigration detention and raised concerns about due process and humane treatment. (29 Dec 2025)

9. FBI deployed additional resources to Minnesota to investigate large-scale fraud schemes. Targeting fraud linked to Somali communities, including referrals for denaturalization, risked stigmatizing an immigrant group while pursuing legitimate financial crimes. (29 Dec 2025)

10. Immigration and Customs Enforcement launched a \$100 million media recruitment campaign for new agents. ICE's ideologically targeted "wartime" recruitment drive, funded by a massive enforcement budget, expanded the state's capacity to detain and deport, especially affecting immigrant communities. (31 Dec 2025)

11. The Trump Administration expanded National Guard and militarized federal deployments to cities and later withdrew them after court rulings. Attempts to deploy, then withdraw, National Guard troops in Democratic-led

cities over protests highlighted tensions between federal authority, state control, and the use of military force in civil contexts. (31 Dec 2025; 1 Jan 2026)

12. Federal agents were deployed in military fatigues with assault rifles in major U.S. cities. The visible militarization of federal agents responding to protests raised fears of intimidation and suppression of lawful dissent. (27 Dec 2025)

13. CIA conducted a drone strike on a Venezuelan port facility. The reported CIA strike, part of regime-change efforts, extended U.S. coercive power abroad and risked escalation without transparent authorization. (30 Dec 2025)

14. U.S. military carried out strikes in Nigeria and Syria against Islamic State-linked militants. Framing the strikes as a “Christmas present” for IS militants and tied to protecting Christians, officials used religious rhetoric to justify ongoing overseas military operations. (28 Dec 2025)

15. U.S. military attempted and failed to seize the oil tanker Bella 1 en route to Venezuela. The failed seizure, followed by Russian protection of the tanker, escalated tensions and illustrated risks of using military tools in economic and sanctions enforcement. (1 Jan 2026)

16. President Donald Trump and Iranian officials exchanged threats amid protests and prior U.S. strikes on Iranian nuclear sites. Mutual threats between Trump and Iran’s leadership during deadly protests heightened the risk of broader conflict and framed foreign dissent within great-power confrontation. (1 Jan 2026)

17. Kentucky State Police and prosecutors arrested Melinda S Spencer and charged her with fetal homicide after a self-managed abortion. Charging a woman for inducing her own abortion, despite state law not banning self-managed abortions, exposed how criminal law can be stretched to police reproductive autonomy. (2 Jan 2026)

18. U.S. appeals court and Trump administration enabled defunding of Planned Parenthood Medicaid reimbursements in many states. Ending Medicaid funding for Planned Parenthood in 22 states and DC threatened access to reproductive and basic health services, especially for low-income women. (31 Dec 2025)

19. Indivisible and allied activists organized a planned Long March against racial gerrymandering in North Carolina. The multi-day march aimed to spotlight Black voter disenfranchisement under the state’s maps, using protest to demand fair representation. (2 Jan 2026)

20. Indivisible and other advocates urged support for the Block The Bombs Act to end U.S. funding for Israeli military actions. The campaign

sought to leverage congressional power over foreign military financing to address humanitarian concerns in Palestine. (2 Jan 2026)

21. Artists and performers canceled shows at the newly renamed Trump Kennedy Center in protest. Artist boycotts of the renamed cultural institution signaled resistance to perceived politicization and personal branding of a public arts venue. (30 Dec 2025)

22. Public School Strong and allied groups organized to defend North Carolina public schools from legislative attacks. Grassroots organizing against state-level efforts to undermine public education highlighted civil society's role in protecting civic institutions. (2 Jan 2026)

23. U.S. law enforcement thwarted a planned New Year's Eve terrorist attack in North Carolina. The arrest of a radicalized teenager planning attacks on Jews, Christians, and LGBTQ+ people showed counterterrorism efforts protecting targeted minorities and public safety. (2 Jan 2026)

24. Cody Wayne Adams and Oklahoma authorities saw Adams charged with manslaughter after a negligent shooting killed a neighbor. The prosecution for a fatal stray bullet during target practice underscored legal accountability for unsafe gun use and broader debates over firearm regulation. (28 Dec 2025)

25. U.S. criminal justice system recorded declining murder and violent crime rates since 2021–2022. Falling murder and violence rates improved public safety conditions, potentially easing pressure for punitive policies that can erode civil liberties. (27 Dec 2025)

26. U.S. public health system and society achieved significant increases in life expectancy after prior declines. Rising life expectancy, driven by fewer overdoses, suicides, murders, and accidents, reflected improved health and safety outcomes that support social stability. (27 Dec 2025)

27. Zohran Mamdani was sworn in as Mayor of New York City. The inauguration of a new NYC mayor marked a democratic transfer of local executive power and potential policy shifts in a major city. (1 Jan 2026)

28. National Links Trust workers and DC residents faced job and service uncertainty after lease termination of public golf courses. The abrupt end of the golf course lease left workers and users in limbo, illustrating how governance decisions can quickly affect livelihoods and access to public space. (1 Jan 2026)

29. Jeffrey Epstein and Mar-a-Lago staff were implicated in allegations of trafficking and exploitation involving spa workers. Reports that young spa workers were sent from Mar-a-Lago to Epstein's home for sexual exploitation raised serious concerns about complicity and protection of vulnerable women and minors. (31 Dec 2025)

## Economic Structure

1. U.S. Department of Homeland Security adjusted civil monetary penalties for inflation. Updating DHS civil penalties preserved their deterrent value, supporting enforcement of safety and security regulations without new legislation. (29 Dec 2025)
2. Food and Drug Administration set OTC monograph order request fees for fiscal year 2026. New user fee levels for OTC drug monograph changes shifted some regulatory costs to industry, funding FDA oversight that protects public health. (29 Dec 2025)
3. Food and Drug Administration announced a roundtable on premarket tobacco applications for ENDS products. The ENDS roundtable aimed to clarify regulatory expectations for small manufacturers, affecting how e-cigarette products enter the market and are scrutinized for safety. (29 Dec 2025)
4. Food and Drug Administration authorized emergency use of two animal drugs for New World screwworm infestations. Emergency authorizations for animal drugs responded to a declared public health emergency, illustrating flexible regulatory tools to protect animal and indirectly human health. (29 Dec 2025)
5. Food and Drug Administration determined regulatory review periods for several biologic and drug products for patent extension. FDA's review-period determinations for ADZYNMA, ALHEMO, LEQEMBI, OJEMDA, ROMVIMZA, and ZELSUVMI shaped potential patent extensions, influencing drug market exclusivity and pricing. (29 Dec 2025)
6. Food and Drug Administration proposed exempting certain radiology devices from premarket notification. Easing premarket requirements for some computer-aided radiology devices could speed innovation and market entry while relying more on post-market controls. (29 Dec 2025)
7. Food and Drug Administration proposed withdrawing approval of three generic drugs for reporting failures. Threatening to pull ANDA approvals for firms that failed to file annual reports enforced compliance obligations but risked reducing availability of some generics. (29 Dec 2025)
8. Food and Drug Administration submitted information collection on PET drug manufacturing practices to OMB. Maintaining data collection on PET drug manufacturing supported quality standards for specialized pharmaceuticals used in diagnostics. (29 Dec 2025)
9. Food and Drug Administration revoked EUAs for two Lucira by Pfizer COVID-19 and flu tests. Ending emergency authorizations for unavailable

COVID-19 tests adjusted the diagnostic market and signaled a shift in pandemic-era regulatory flexibilities. (2 Jan 2026)

10. Food and Drug Administration determined that MYSOLINE suspension was withdrawn from sale for safety reasons. Finding that a primidone suspension left the market due to contamination concerns barred generic copies, prioritizing safety over expanded competition. (2 Jan 2026)

11. Occupational Safety and Health Administration extended OMB approval for rigging equipment information collection. Continuing paperwork requirements for rigging equipment standards preserved OSHA's ability to monitor compliance and workplace safety in material handling. (31 Dec 2025)

12. Occupational Safety and Health Administration extended OMB approval for the Susan Harwood Training Grant Program information collection. Maintaining data collection for safety training grants supported oversight of federally funded worker-protection programs. (31 Dec 2025)

13. Environmental Protection Agency submitted multiple environmental information collection renewals to OMB. EPA's renewals for airbags, grain elevators, kraft pulp mills, nonroad engines, TSCA reviews, and pesticide data call-ins sustained reporting frameworks that underpin environmental enforcement. (30 Dec 2025)

14. Drug Enforcement Administration and Department of Health and Human Services extended COVID-19 telemedicine flexibilities for prescribing controlled substances. The fourth temporary extension allowed remote prescribing of controlled drugs through 2026, preserving access to care while prolonging emergency-style regulatory conditions. (31 Dec 2025)

15. General Services Administration updated 2026 mileage reimbursement rates for privately owned vehicles. Aligning federal mileage rates with IRS standards affected travel reimbursements and operating costs for federal employees and contractors. (2 Jan 2026)

16. Transportation Security Administration revised pipeline security data collection requirements. The updated information collection for pipeline security and cybersecurity imposed significant reporting burdens on operators, shaping the cost and rigor of critical infrastructure protection. (2 Jan 2026)

17. Social Security Administration experienced severe caseload backlogs after budget cuts. Backlogs exceeding six million cases, attributed to funding cuts, undermined timely access to benefits for vulnerable Americans and eroded trust in a key social insurance institution. (30 Dec 2025)

18. The Trump Administration implemented large budget cuts to health-care, science, and anti-hunger programs. Reductions in health, research, and

food assistance funding weakened public goods and disproportionately harmed low-income and vulnerable populations. (27 Dec 2025)

19. The Trump Administration allowed enhanced Affordable Care Act tax credits to expire after a prolonged shutdown. Letting expanded ACA subsidies lapse raised health insurance costs for millions, worsening inequality in access to care after a 43-day budget standoff. (1 Jan 2026)

20. The Trump Administration delayed tariff increases on furniture and cabinets and reduced antidumping duties on Italian pasta. Last-minute delays and reductions in planned tariffs, following exporter and foreign lobbying, softened economic impacts while revealing how trade policy responds to organized interests. (1 Jan 2026; 2 Jan 2026)

21. China imposed a 55% tariff on U.S. beef and cut soybean purchases. China's steep tariffs and reduced agricultural imports intensified pressure on U.S. farmers, illustrating how trade conflicts can economically punish domestic constituencies. (31 Dec 2025)

22. The Trump Administration implemented tariff carve-outs that reduced effective rates on some imports. Extensive exemptions, such as lower real tariffs on semiconductors, mitigated headline trade measures' impact and showed selective relief for influential sectors. (30 Dec 2025)

23. U.S. economy experienced rising corporate bankruptcies and household financial stress. Increased bankruptcies and household strain signaled underlying economic fragility, with potential to heighten public discontent and vulnerability to populist appeals. (30 Dec 2025)

24. China advanced rapidly in electric and autonomous vehicle technologies. China's regulatory support and investment in EVs and autonomy bolstered its technological and industrial position, challenging other democracies' economic competitiveness. (30 Dec 2025)

25. The Trump Administration terminated the National Links Trust lease for DC public golf courses without a successor plan. Ending the lease mid-renovation disrupted public recreation services and raised suspicions of paving the way for politically connected control of public land. (1 Jan 2026)

26. China reduced purchases of U.S. soybeans in favor of other suppliers. Diversifying away from U.S. soybeans further squeezed American farmers, illustrating long-term costs of trade tensions for rural economies. (31 Dec 2025)

27. U.S. housing developers and city governments increased housing construction leading to rent drops in several cities. Expanded market-rate housing supply contributed to lower rents, supporting the idea that building more units can improve affordability and economic stability. (30 Dec 2025)

28. Biden administration uncovered a large welfare fraud scheme in

Minnesota. Exposing a \$250 million Medicaid fraud case highlighted vulnerabilities in social programs but also demonstrated federal oversight capacity to protect public funds. (30 Dec 2025)

29. Local politicians in U.S. cities promoted reducing regulatory costs to support small businesses. Efforts to streamline permits and lower compliance costs aimed to boost small business formation, with implications for local economic dynamism and opportunity. (30 Dec 2025)

30. Japan's government pursued multiple reforms to attract foreign direct investment and modernize its economy. Japan's push for greenfield FDI, semiconductor subsidies, eased immigration, and ambitious FDI targets sought to revitalize growth and technological capacity in a democratic ally. (30 Dec 2025)

31. The Trump Administration delayed higher tariffs on various consumer goods after exporter warnings. Postponing tariff hikes on items like furniture and cabinets, while touting tariffs as a success, revealed tensions between protectionist rhetoric and economic risk management. (2 Jan 2026)

## **Information, Memory, and Manipulation**

1. CBS and 60 Minutes censored and removed an investigative report on CICOT from official channels. Pulling the CICOT investigation from broadcast and archives, despite viral bootlegs, highlighted how powerful media outlets can suppress reporting that may be politically sensitive. (27 Dec 2025)

2. U.S. Department of Justice was accused of unlawfully limiting release of Jeffrey Epstein files through redactions and delays. Advocates charged that DOJ's handling of Epstein records violated transparency laws, suggesting institutional reluctance to fully expose elite-linked wrongdoing. (27 Dec 2025)

3. The Trump Administration imposed visa bans on European anti-disinformation figures, labeling their work as censorship. Targeting foreign anti-disinformation advocates with visa bans sought to delegitimize and deter efforts to enforce platform rules and counter propaganda. (29 Dec 2025)

4. Donald Trump and allies used deceptive fundraising emails disguised as surveys and threats about tariff rebate checks. Misleading supporters into donation funnels under the guise of surveys and false economic claims eroded trust and weaponized disinformation for political finance. (30 Dec 2025)

5. President Donald Trump and the White House shared misleading images claiming wind turbines killed a bald eagle in the U.S. Posting old foreign images as evidence of domestic wind turbine harms spread false-

hoods about renewable energy from official channels, distorting environmental policy debates. (31 Dec 2025; 2 Jan 2026)

6. U.S. Department of Homeland Security used Japanese artist Hiroshi Nagai's work without permission in a deportation-themed post. DHS's unauthorized use of artwork to depict a tranquil post-deportation America raised ethical and legal concerns about state propaganda and intellectual property. (2 Jan 2026)

7. The Trump Administration was accused of underreporting and delaying disclosure of millions of Epstein documents. Shifting estimates and extended timelines for Epstein file releases suggested selective control over sensitive historical records involving powerful individuals. (31 Dec 2025; 1 Jan 2026)

8. The Trump Administration amplified Kremlin narratives by falsely accusing Ukraine of attacking Putin's residence. Trump's repetition of debunked Russian claims about a Ukrainian attack undermined U.S. credibility and aligned domestic discourse with an authoritarian adversary's propaganda. (30 Dec 2025)

9. The Trump Administration celebrated tariffs publicly while quietly implementing carve-outs and delays. The gap between tariff rhetoric and practice, including reduced effective rates and postponements, reflected manipulation of economic narratives for political gain. (30 Dec 2025; 1 Jan 2026; 2 Jan 2026)

10. Republican leaders of the NC Select Committee on Oversight and Reform framed oversight attacks on Chapel Hill schools as reform. Portraying aggressive scrutiny of a school district as necessary oversight contributed to a narrative that delegitimizes public education under the guise of accountability. (2 Jan 2026)

## CHAPTER 25

### WEEK 51 (3 JAN 2026 – 9 JAN 2026): WAR, OIL, AND ENFORCEMENT AS RULE

*A near-static clock masks a week when war powers, immigration raids, and economic policy were fused into a single project of personalized executive rule.*

This was a tumultuous week in which the presidency operated like an almost unchecked personal regime, leveraging war, oil, and immigration enforcement as key tools. The unilateral kidnapping of Nicolás Maduro and the announced seizure of Venezuelan oil, without congressional approval, heightened pressures on executive limits, the rule of law, and global democracy standards. Simultaneously, a significant surge in immigration in Minnesota—culminating in the killing of Renee Nicole Good and other shootings—showed federal security forces acting as instruments of political will, with the FBI excluding state investigators and senior officials branding a deceased legal observer as a “domestic terrorist.” In various areas, the administration intertwined economic and foreign policy to reward insiders, from Citgo’s fire sale to promises of “total safety” for oil companies. Control of information and revisionism strengthened: January 6 was recast as patriotic, Epstein files were concealed in violation of law, and coordinated disinformation surrounded the Minneapolis shooting. Counter-forces existed—Senate efforts to push back on war powers, impeachment articles against DHS, mass protests, and some corporate and legislative initiatives to defend democratic norms—but they responded to a sharp wave of authoritarian executive actions.

## Power and Authority

1. Mayor Zohran Mamdani revoked late-term executive orders of former New York City mayor Eric Adams. The new New York City mayor voided executive orders issued by his indicted predecessor after September 2024, signaling a reset of mayoral authority and an effort to restore public trust in local executive power. (Letters from an American (Heather Cox Richardson) | 3 Jan 2026)

2. President Donald Trump ordered a U.S. military raid to abduct Venezuelan leader Nicolás Maduro without congressional authorization. Trump directed U.S. forces to seize Venezuela's president in Caracas without consulting Congress, blurring lines between law enforcement and war and expanding unilateral presidential control over foreign military operations. (Noahpinion (Noah Smith); Letters from an American (Heather Cox Richardson); Democracy Outloud (Karen Zeigler); The Guardian; The 50501 Movement | 3 Jan 2026; 4 Jan 2026; 5 Jan 2026; 7 Jan 2026; 9 Jan 2026)

3. President Donald Trump ordered detention of Nicolás Maduro and his wife without notifying Congress. By detaining Venezuela's leaders and bypassing required briefings to congressional leaders, Trump further weakened statutory war-powers constraints and sidelined the legislature in decisions to use force abroad. (The Guardian | 4 Jan 2026)

4. President Donald Trump claimed authority to use military force to seize foreign oil resources. Trump publicly asserted a right to attack other countries to take their oil, normalizing resource-driven warfare and signaling disregard for international norms that limit executive war-making. (Letters from an American (Heather Cox Richardson) | 6 Jan 2026)

5. President Donald Trump threatened military action to acquire Greenland. Trump described Greenland as a U.S. security need and raised military options against a NATO ally's territory, stretching presidential power into coercive territorial ambitions. (The Guardian; Letters from an American (Heather Cox Richardson) | 6 Jan 2026; 7 Jan 2026)

6. Secretary of State Marco Rubio stated the U.S. retained a military option to seize Greenland. Rubio's remarks that the U.S. could militarily seize Greenland reinforced an executive posture that treats allied territory as subject to unilateral force, undermining alliance-based checks on presidential power. (Meidas Plus | 7 Jan 2026)

7. President Donald Trump asserted that his presidential power was limited only by his own morality, not international law. Trump's dismissal of international law as a constraint on his authority signaled a personalized view of executive power that weakens external legal checks on presidential decisions. (The Guardian | 8 Jan 2026)

8. President Donald Trump ignored the Impoundment Control Act and seized Congress's budgetary authority. Upon taking office in 2025, Trump disregarded statutory limits on withholding funds and unilaterally controlled national finances and troop deployments, eroding Congress's constitutional power of the purse. (*Letters from an American* (Heather Cox Richardson) | 6 Jan 2026)

9. President Donald Trump issued sweeping pardons and commutations for January 6 insurrection participants. Trump's mass clemency for Capitol attackers removed legal consequences for an assault on the transfer of power, weakening deterrence against future anti-democratic violence. (*Popular Information* (Judd Legum) | 6 Jan 2026)

10. President Donald Trump issued an executive order prioritizing warfighter needs over investor returns in defense contracting. The order barred stock buybacks and dividends for underperforming defense contractors, expanding executive leverage over the defense industry's financial practices in the name of military readiness. (*White House / Executive Orders* | 7 Jan 2026)

11. President Donald Trump described January 6 rioters as peaceful patriotic protesters and vilified election certifiers. By recasting a violent attack on Congress as legitimate protest and blaming officials who certified results, Trump used presidential rhetoric to delegitimize lawful authority and normalize insurrectionary behavior. (*Letters from an American* (Heather Cox Richardson) | 7 Jan 2026)

12. President Donald Trump announced a plan to seize tens of millions of barrels of Venezuelan oil for U.S. control. Trump's proposal for the U.S. to take control of large volumes of Venezuelan oil and direct proceeds outside the Treasury concentrated resource power in the executive and blurred lines between state and private gain. (*Letters from an American* (Heather Cox Richardson) | 7 Jan 2026; 8 Jan 2026)

13. President Donald Trump announced a proposal to increase the U.S. military budget from \$1 trillion to \$1.5 trillion. Trump's call for a 50% jump in defense spending, justified by tariff revenues, would further expand military capacity under presidential control, affecting resource balance between security and civilian needs. (*Letters from an American* (Heather Cox Richardson) | 8 Jan 2026)

14. Congressional Republicans proposed increasing the defense budget from \$1 trillion to \$1.5 trillion to support new foreign policy initiatives. Republican lawmakers backed a major defense budget expansion tied to foreign ventures, reinforcing a political consensus around high military spending that strengthens executive tools for overseas action. (*Meidas Plus* | 8

Jan 2026)

15. President Donald Trump withdrew the United States from the UNFCCC and dozens of other international organizations. Trump's memorandum pulling the U.S. out of the UN climate treaty and 65 other bodies reduced external checks on U.S. policy and weakened multilateral constraints on executive climate and foreign decisions. (The Guardian | 8 Jan 2026)

## Institutions and Governance

1. Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals ruled California's open carry ban in populous counties unconstitutional. The appeals court struck down a major state gun restriction under the Second Amendment, reshaping the balance between public safety regulation and individual arms rights in large urban counties. (The Guardian | 3 Jan 2026)

2. Attorney General Pam Bondi fired senior DOJ ethics attorney Joseph Tirrell without stated cause. Removing the department's senior ethics lawyer, who had trained Bondi, signaled political interference in internal oversight and may chill independent ethics enforcement within the Justice Department. (The Guardian | 3 Jan 2026)

3. Mayor Zohran Mamdani was sworn in as mayor of New York City after a private and public ceremony. Mamdani's inauguration marked a political shift in New York City governance, with pledges to use municipal power to address inequality and represent residents across ideological lines. (Letters from an American (Heather Cox Richardson) | 3 Jan 2026)

4. House Judiciary Committee Republicans released the transcript of former special counsel Jack Smith's testimony. Publishing Smith's deposition, in which he described evidence of Trump's criminal scheme to overturn the 2020 election, added to the public record on presidential accountability despite the timing over a holiday. (Letters from an American (Heather Cox Richardson) | 4 Jan 2026)

5. U.S. Supreme Court rejected President Trump's claim of authority to deploy federalized National Guard troops in Chicago. The Court's 6–3 ruling limiting Trump's ability to send National Guard forces into Chicago reinforced judicial checks on unilateral domestic security deployments. (Letters from an American (Heather Cox Richardson) | 4 Jan 2026)

6. Wisconsin Judge Hannah Dugan resigned after conviction for obstructing a federal immigration arrest. Dugan's resignation under impeachment threats from state Republicans, following her conviction for aiding an immigrant's temporary escape, highlighted tensions between judicial inde-

pendence and enforcement of federal immigration law. (*The Guardian* | 4 Jan 2026)

7. U.S. Department of Justice faced a statutory deadline to justify redactions and withholdings in the Epstein files to Congress. The DOJ's obligation to explain any withheld Epstein records under a new transparency law tested whether Congress could compel disclosure in a politically sensitive investigation. (*Letters from an American* (Heather Cox Richardson) | 4 Jan 2026)

8. U.S. Department of Justice released less than 1% of Jeffrey Epstein-related documents despite a legal mandate. By disclosing only a small fraction of required Epstein files and missing statutory deadlines, DOJ undermined transparency law and fueled perceptions of protection for powerful figures. (*The Guardian*; *Letters from an American* (Heather Cox Richardson); *Meidas Plus* | 6 Jan 2026; 9 Jan 2026)

9. House of Representatives failed to immediately pursue impeachment proceedings over the Venezuela invasion while out of session. The House's delayed response to calls for impeaching Trump over the unauthorized Venezuela operation exposed limits in Congress's capacity to rapidly check executive overreach. (*Democracy Outloud* (Karen Zeigler) | 4 Jan 2026)

10. Members of Congress reported receiving no required briefings on U.S. military strikes in Venezuela. Lawmakers' statements that they were not informed about the Venezuela operation highlighted executive noncompliance with war-powers notification rules and weakened legislative oversight of military action. (*Letters from an American* (Heather Cox Richardson) | 5 Jan 2026)

11. Representative Ted Lieu declared the U.S. attack on Venezuela illegal absent congressional authorization. Lieu's public assertion that the Venezuela strike violated constitutional war powers underscored internal legislative resistance to unilateral executive warfare. (*Letters from an American* (Heather Cox Richardson) | 5 Jan 2026)

12. House Judiciary Committee planned to hear testimony from former Special Counsel Jack Smith. Scheduling Smith's testimony signaled ongoing congressional scrutiny of past presidential conduct and the Justice Department's handling of election-related crimes. (*Meidas Plus* | 9 Jan 2026)

13. Representatives Ro Khanna and Thomas Massie considered using inherent contempt powers against Attorney General Pam Bondi over Epstein files noncompliance. Bipartisan discussion of inherent contempt, including fines or arrest of the attorney general, reflected Congress's search for rarely used tools to enforce transparency mandates on the executive branch. (*Popular Information* (Judd Legum) | 7 Jan 2026)

14. Representatives Ro Khanna and Thomas Massie asked a federal judge

to appoint a special master to oversee release of Epstein files. Seeking judicial appointment of an independent official to manage Epstein disclosures showed Congress turning to the courts to compel executive compliance with transparency law. (The Guardian | 8 Jan 2026)

15. House of Representatives passed a bill to extend Affordable Care Act tax credits for three years with bipartisan support. The House vote to continue ACA subsidies, including support from 17 Republicans, demonstrated cross-party legislative action to preserve health coverage despite executive hostility. (The Guardian; Letters from an American (Heather Cox Richardson) | 8 Jan 2026; 9 Jan 2026)

16. U.S. Senate advanced a War Powers Resolution restricting further military action in Venezuela without authorization. A 52–47 Senate vote, with five Republicans joining Democrats, moved forward a measure to bar additional Venezuela operations absent explicit approval, reasserting congressional war powers against executive claims. (Meidas Plus; Letters from an American (Heather Cox Richardson) | 8 Jan 2026; 9 Jan 2026)

17. U.S. Senate unanimously approved a resolution to install a plaque honoring Capitol Police for January 6. The Senate's bipartisan move to commemorate officers who defended the Capitol contrasted with executive efforts to recast January 6, reinforcing an institutional narrative that treats the attack as a serious assault. (Letters from an American (Heather Cox Richardson) | 9 Jan 2026)

18. Representative Robin Kelly filed articles of impeachment against Homeland Security Secretary Kristi Noem. Impeachment articles accusing Noem of obstruction and self-dealing over the Minneapolis ICE shooting signaled an attempt by the House to hold a cabinet official accountable for alleged abuses in immigration enforcement. (The Guardian | 9 Jan 2026)

19. Democratic lawmakers in Congress threatened to withhold Department of Homeland Security funding unless ICE reforms were enacted. By tying DHS appropriations to changes in ICE practices after Renee Good's killing, Democrats used budget leverage to push for accountability in federal immigration enforcement. (The Guardian | 9 Jan 2026)

20. U.S. District Judge Lorna Schofield ruled that Trump's acting U.S. attorney appointment John Sarcone was unlawful. The court's finding that Sarcone did not lawfully hold the acting U.S. attorney role added to judicial pushback against politicized Justice Department appointments. (Letters from an American (Heather Cox Richardson) | 9 Jan 2026)

21. Federal district court and Judge Cameron McGowan Currie ordered Trump-appointed lawyer Lindsey Halligan to justify continued use of the U.S. attorney title after her appointment was ruled unlawful. Requiring

Halligan to explain why she still acted as U.S. attorney despite a prior ruling against her appointment underscored judicial enforcement of limits on politicized prosecutorial roles. (The Guardian | 7 Jan 2026)

22. Federal judge disqualified ex-Trump campaign lawyer John Sarcone from investigating New York Attorney General Letitia James. Removing Sarcone as investigator due to unlawful appointment further constrained efforts to use U.S. attorney posts for partisan probes of political opponents. (Meidas Plus | 8 Jan 2026)

23. U.S. Department of Justice sued 22 states for refusing to provide complete voter lists to the federal government. DOJ's lawsuits seeking full state voter rolls, including sensitive data, advanced a national voter file project that could facilitate aggressive purges and shift election control toward the federal executive. (The Guardian | 5 Jan 2026)

24. The Trump Administration sued California cities Morgan Hill and Petaluma over local natural gas restrictions. By challenging city-level gas limits under federal preemption law, the administration used litigation to curb local climate policies and assert centralized control over energy regulation. (The Guardian | 6 Jan 2026)

25. Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth issued a formal censure of Senator Mark Kelly and initiated review to strip his retired rank and pension. Censuring a sitting senator for urging troops to resist unlawful orders, and threatening his military status, blurred lines between civilian oversight and military discipline and risked chilling lawful dissent by former officers. (The Guardian | 5 Jan 2026)

26. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission announced a public Sunshine Act meeting on voting procedures and organizational changes. The EEOC's open meeting notice, with public access and transcripts, reflected adherence to transparency norms in agency decision-making on internal governance rules. (Federal Register | 9 Jan 2026)

27. Arizona Supreme Court and state public safety agencies evacuated the Arizona Supreme Court building after discovery of explosive vials. The evacuation of a state high court due to an explosive threat underscored physical security risks to judicial institutions and the need to protect courts from intimidation. (The Guardian | 5 Jan 2026)

28. National Rifle Association filed a federal lawsuit against its charitable arm, the NRA Foundation, over alleged misappropriation of donations. The NRA's suit accusing its foundation of trying to seize control and misuse \$160 million in donations highlighted governance struggles within a major advocacy organization that influences public policy. (The Guardian | 6 Jan 2026)

29. U.S. Department of Justice and FBI excluded Minnesota's Bureau of

Criminal Apprehension from the investigation into the ICE shooting of Renee Nicole Good. By revoking state investigators' access to evidence and witnesses in the Minneapolis shooting case, federal authorities centralized control over a controversial probe, raising doubts about independence and transparency. (The Guardian; Letters from an American (Heather Cox Richardson) | 8 Jan 2026; 9 Jan 2026)

30. U.S. Department of Homeland Security and ICE detained U.S. citizen Dulce Consuelo Díaz Morales for 25 days despite evidence of citizenship. Holding a woman who presented a U.S. birth certificate for weeks before court intervention exposed due process failures in immigration enforcement and risks of citizens being swept into removal systems. (Meidas Plus; The Guardian | 8 Jan 2026; 9 Jan 2026)

31. U.S. Department of Homeland Security reassigned over 28,000 law enforcement personnel to ICE, prompting Senate oversight demands. A large-scale diversion of agents to immigration enforcement, questioned by 29 senators, suggested a reprioritization of federal law enforcement away from other serious crimes toward deportation. (The Guardian | 7 Jan 2026)

32. U.S. Department of Homeland Security and ICE deployed approximately 2,000 agents to the Minneapolis area for an extraordinary immigration operation. The unprecedented surge of federal agents into Minneapolis, tied to fraud allegations and mass detentions, exemplified the use of national security infrastructure for intensive localized immigration crackdowns. (The Guardian; Letters from an American (Heather Cox Richardson) | 6 Jan 2026; 8 Jan 2026; 9 Jan 2026)

33. U.S. Department of Homeland Security deployed over 100 additional Customs and Border Protection agents to Minnesota after the ICE shooting. Sending more federal agents into Minnesota amid protests over Renee Good's killing escalated federal presence in a tense environment, raising concerns about militarized responses to local unrest. (The Guardian | 8 Jan 2026)

34. U.S. Department of Homeland Security and ICE conducted a large-scale immigration enforcement operation in Minneapolis that led to overcrowded detention facilities. The Minneapolis surge pushed ICE facilities beyond capacity, worsening conditions and illustrating how aggressive enforcement campaigns strain detention systems and detainee rights. (The Guardian | 9 Jan 2026)

35. U.S. Department of Homeland Security and Border Patrol shot two people outside a Portland hospital during an immigration stop. Border Patrol agents' shooting of two individuals while seeking an undocumented suspect

near a hospital intensified scrutiny of federal use of force in civilian spaces far from the border. (*The Guardian* | 9 Jan 2026)

36. U.S. Department of Homeland Security released Consuelo Diaz Morales from custody following a federal court order blocking her deportation. DHS's release of a detained U.S. citizen only after judicial intervention highlighted the role of courts in correcting immigration enforcement errors that threaten citizens' rights. (*Meidas Plus; The Guardian* | 8 Jan 2026; 9 Jan 2026)

37. U.S. Department of Homeland Security and ICE was accused of blocking medics from reaching Renee Nicole Good after she was shot by an agent. Witness reports that federal officers obstructed emergency medical access to Good raised questions about adherence to basic duty-of-care standards during federal operations. (*The Guardian* | 9 Jan 2026)

38. U.S. Department of Homeland Security was targeted with impeachment articles and funding threats over ICE's conduct in Minneapolis. Combined impeachment filings and budget threats against DHS reflected escalating institutional conflict over the department's role in aggressive immigration enforcement and lethal force incidents. (*The Guardian* | 9 Jan 2026)

39. U.S. Department of Justice arraigned Venezuelan President Nicolás Maduro and Cilia Flores in U.S. federal court on narco-terrorism and weapons charges. Bringing a sitting foreign leader and his wife before a U.S. court after a contested military capture blurred boundaries between domestic criminal jurisdiction and international political conflict. (*The Guardian; Meidas Plus* | 5 Jan 2026; 6 Jan 2026)

40. U.S. Department of Justice charged Nicolás Maduro with drug-terrorism and weapons offenses and accepted his not-guilty plea. Proceeding with terrorism and drug charges against a foreign president captured in a disputed operation raised questions about using U.S. courts to legitimize regime-change actions. (*The Guardian* | 6 Jan 2026)

41. U.S. Department of Justice appeared to prioritize elite secrecy by slow-walking Epstein files while aggressively expanding surveillance and enforcement against ordinary people. The contrast between opaque handling of Epstein records and expansive immigration and security operations illustrated an institutional pattern of shielding elites while intensifying scrutiny of vulnerable populations. (*Letters from an American (Heather Cox Richardson); The Guardian; Meidas Plus; Popular Information (Judd Legum)* | 6 Jan 2026; 7 Jan 2026; 9 Jan 2026)

42. U.S. Department of Homeland Security and ICE was accused of detaining mostly non-criminal immigrants amid rising detention numbers. Reports that 92% of detention growth involved people without criminal

convictions suggested a shift toward broad preventive detention rather than targeted enforcement. (Meidas Plus | 9 Jan 2026)

## Civil Rights and Dissent

1. Answer Coalition and allied groups organized emergency protests across the U.S. against military action in Venezuela. Rapidly planned demonstrations opposing the Venezuela operation mobilized citizens to demand transparency, congressional oversight, and limits on unilateral war-making. (The 50501 Movement; Democracy Outloud (Karen Zeigler) | 3 Jan 2026; 4 Jan 2026)

2. Protesters in major U.S. cities held rapid-response demonstrations against the U.S. military operation in Venezuela. Protests in cities like New York and Chicago called for constitutional war powers, statutory processes, and an end to escalation, asserting public opposition to executive-led regime change. (The 50501 Movement | 3 Jan 2026)

3. Stanford University students and Santa Clara County prosecutors brought felony conspiracy and vandalism charges against pro-Palestinian protesters who occupied the university president's office. Felony charges against student occupiers seeking divestment from Israel represented one of the harshest criminal responses to campus protests, raising concerns about chilling academic dissent. (The Guardian | 5 Jan 2026)

4. Kentucky law enforcement and prosecutors charged Melinda S. Spencer with fetal homicide and related offenses after a self-managed abortion. Applying a fetal homicide statute to a woman's own pregnancy, despite statutory language to the contrary, highlighted risks of criminalizing pregnancy outcomes and undermining reproductive rights. (The Guardian | 5 Jan 2026)

5. U.S. Department of Homeland Security and ICE conducted a surge operation in Minnesota that disproportionately targeted Somali communities. The deployment of 2,000 agents focused on Somali residents intensified fears of ethnic profiling and collective punishment in immigration enforcement. (The Guardian; Letters from an American (Heather Cox Richardson) | 6 Jan 2026; 8 Jan 2026; 9 Jan 2026)

6. The Trump Administration was reported to be seizing perceived enemies off the streets. Reports that federal agents were abducting individuals labeled enemies of the state suggested a move toward extrajudicial detentions that threaten basic civil liberties. (Letters from an American (Heather Cox Richardson) | 6 Jan 2026)

7. Community residents in Sand Springs, Oklahoma protested annexation of agricultural land for a data center development. Local opposition to a data

center project reflected community concerns about environmental impacts and democratic input into land-use decisions. (Meidas Plus | 6 Jan 2026)

8. The Trump Administration and ICE conducted an immigration surge that led to multiple shootings and deaths of immigrants in custody. A pattern of ICE shootings and at least 20 deaths in custody, culminating in Renee Good's killing, underscored the human rights stakes of aggressive immigration enforcement. (Democracy Outloud (Karen Zeigler); Meidas Plus | 7 Jan 2026; 9 Jan 2026)

9. Minneapolis Mayor Jacob Frey and Governor Tim Walz publicly demanded ICE leave Minneapolis after the killing of Renee Nicole Good. Local leaders' calls for ICE's departure and transparency about the shooting highlighted a clash between local governance and federal enforcement over civil rights and public safety. (The Guardian; The 50501 Movement | 7 Jan 2026)

10. Grassroots organization Indivisible organized over 1,000 vigils nationwide to honor Renee Good and protest ICE. Planned vigils across the country transformed outrage over Good's killing into sustained civic action demanding accountability and reform of immigration enforcement. (Meidas Plus | 8 Jan 2026)

11. Protesters nationwide held demonstrations and vigils against ICE detentions and use of force after Renee Good's death. Mass protests across the U.S. challenged ICE's growing detention of non-criminal immigrants and alleged excessive force, pressing for changes in federal enforcement practices. (Letters from an American (Heather Cox Richardson); Meidas Plus; Democracy Outloud (Karen Zeigler) | 9 Jan 2026)

12. 50501 Movement and allied organizers called for nationwide protests titled "ICE OUT FOR GOOD" on January 10–11. Coordinated protests in all 50 states sought to build pressure for immigration reform and the dismantling or restructuring of ICE. (The 50501 Movement | 9 Jan 2026)

13. Community groups in Raleigh, North Carolina planned Moral Monday and federal building protests against benefit cuts and immigrant detentions at Guantanamo Bay. Local coalitions linked opposition to health-care and SNAP cuts with protests against immigrant detention practices, framing social welfare and human rights as connected democratic issues. (Democracy Outloud (Karen Zeigler) | 9 Jan 2026)

14. ICE Watch organizers scheduled verifier and dispatcher training to monitor ICE activity and protect communities. Training volunteers to track ICE operations and coordinate responses represented grassroots efforts to build community defense and oversight of federal enforcement. (Democracy Outloud (Karen Zeigler) | 9 Jan 2026)

15. Grand Rapids police and prosecutors arrested protest organizer Jessica Plichta on misdemeanor charges after an anti-Venezuela-war demonstration. The arrest of a single protest leader from a larger peaceful crowd suggested selective enforcement that could deter organizing against foreign policy decisions. (The Guardian | 8 Jan 2026)

16. U.S. public as measured by polling expressed strong opposition to military intervention in Venezuela. Polls showing only 16% support for a U.S. invasion of Venezuela highlighted a gap between executive war decisions and popular preferences, reinforcing the democratic importance of public consent for war. (Letters from an American (Heather Cox Richardson) | 5 Jan 2026)

17. The Trump Administration and ICE detained a Maryland woman claiming U.S. citizenship for 25 days before court intervention. The prolonged detention of a citizen despite documentary evidence underscored how immigration enforcement can erode the security of citizenship and due process protections. (Meidas Plus; The Guardian | 8 Jan 2026; 9 Jan 2026)

18. The Trump Administration and ICE was accused of treating Somali and immigrant communities as targets in a “war” on Minnesota. Governor Walz’s description of the Minneapolis surge as a war on communities highlighted how immigration operations can be experienced as collective punishment of minority groups. (Letters from an American (Heather Cox Richardson) | 8 Jan 2026)

19. U.S. Border Patrol agents shot two people in Portland during an immigration enforcement stop near a hospital. The Portland shooting incident raised concerns about the safety of bystanders and the proportionality of force used in immigration operations in civilian settings. (The Guardian | 9 Jan 2026)

20. The Trump Administration and allied officials labeled Renee Nicole Good and other protesters as domestic terrorists without evidence. Branding a slain legal observer and protest networks as terrorists exemplified the use of security rhetoric to delegitimize dissent and justify harsh enforcement. (The 50501 Movement; Democracy Outloud (Karen Zeigler); Letters from an American (Heather Cox Richardson); The Guardian | 7 Jan 2026; 8 Jan 2026; 9 Jan 2026)

21. The Trump Administration pardoned and celebrated January 6 participants while recasting them as patriots. Clemency and praise for those who attacked the Capitol signaled tolerance for political violence aligned with the regime and delegitimized lawful opposition. (Popular Information (Judd Legum); Letters from an American (Heather Cox Richardson) | 6 Jan 2026; 7 Jan 2026)

22. U.S. government and Venezuelan authorities triggered a crackdown on journalists and protesters in Venezuela following the U.S. operation. The U.S. removal of Maduro was followed by Venezuelan detentions of journalists and protest restrictions, illustrating how foreign interventions can indirectly fuel repression abroad. (Letters from an American (Heather Cox Richardson) | 7 Jan 2026)

23. U.S. policymakers and courts legalized gay marriage nationwide in 2015. Recognition of same-sex marriage as equal under law marked a major expansion of civil rights and family recognition for LGBTQ+ citizens. (Noahpinion (Noah Smith) | 4 Jan 2026)

## Economic Structure

1. U.S. Congress and federal policymakers advanced nationwide legalization of marijuana to reduce criminalization and incarceration. Moves toward legal marijuana aimed to shrink nonviolent drug incarceration and shift enforcement resources, altering the economic and carceral landscape around drug policy. (Noahpinion (Noah Smith) | 4 Jan 2026)

2. U.S. federal government expanded the Earned Income Tax Credit and Child Tax Credit to reduce after-tax poverty. Broadening refundable tax credits under both parties increased income support for low-income families, modestly countering inequality through the tax code. (Noahpinion (Noah Smith) | 4 Jan 2026)

3. U.S. policymakers implemented measures that reduced the uninsured rate to about 8% by the 2020s. Policies that expanded health coverage lowered the share of uninsured Americans, strengthening the social safety net and economic security tied to healthcare access. (Noahpinion (Noah Smith) | 4 Jan 2026)

4. U.S. labor market and anti-discrimination policies contributed to a significant reduction in the Black–White employment gap by 2023. A narrowing racial employment gap indicated progress toward more equal labor-market access, with implications for income distribution and social cohesion. (Noahpinion (Noah Smith) | 4 Jan 2026)

5. Drug Enforcement Administration set 2026 aggregate production quotas for Schedule I and II controlled substances and key List I chemicals. DEA's quotas determined legal production levels for powerful drugs and precursors, shaping pharmaceutical supply, diversion risks, and enforcement priorities. (Federal Register | 5 Jan 2026)

6. Environmental Protection Agency requested nominations for ad hoc peer reviewers for the Science Advisory Committee on Chemicals. Seeking

outside experts to review high-priority chemicals under TSCA affected how scientific evidence informs regulatory decisions on chemical risks. (Federal Register | 5 Jan 2026)

7. Environmental Protection Agency announced receipt and status of new chemical submissions under TSCA and invited public comment. EPA's notice on new chemical applications and comment periods maintained procedural transparency in approving substances that can affect health and the environment. (Federal Register | 5 Jan 2026)

8. Environmental Protection Agency approved Clean Air Act permits for new gasoline dispensing facilities in tribal areas of California. Approving general permits for tribal gasoline facilities balanced tribal economic development with federal air-quality standards in Indian Country. (Federal Register | 5 Jan 2026)

9. Environmental Protection Agency issued draft guidance to streamline pesticide registration notifications and minor formulation changes. Updating pesticide guidance aimed to reduce regulatory burdens while preserving health and environmental protections, affecting agricultural and chemical industries. (Federal Register | 5 Jan 2026)

10. Environmental Protection Agency completed a final risk evaluation finding 1,3-butadiene poses unreasonable health risks under certain uses. EPA's determination that 1,3-butadiene is unreasonably risky triggered forthcoming risk-management rules that will constrain industrial uses to protect public health. (Federal Register | 5 Jan 2026)

11. Environmental Protection Agency published TSCA findings that certain new chemicals and uses are not likely to present unreasonable risk. EPA's clearance of several new substances allowed manufacturers to proceed, illustrating how risk assessments enable innovation while setting safety baselines. (Federal Register | 5 Jan 2026; 8 Jan 2026)

12. Environmental Protection Agency sought comment on a draft Pesticide Registration Notice for Qualified Conservation Programs and External Parties. The proposed process for recognizing conservation programs and external parties in pesticide regulation could shift how non-federal actors participate in environmental compliance. (Federal Register | 5 Jan 2026)

13. Food and Drug Administration determined regulatory review periods for several drugs and a medical device for patent extension purposes. FDA's review-period determinations for AUGTYRO, BRENZAVVY, IZERVAY, MEDIBEACON, and ZURZUVAE affected how long manufacturers can enjoy market exclusivity, influencing drug prices and innovation incentives. (Federal Register | 5 Jan 2026; 6 Jan 2026)

14. Hilton-affiliated hotel in Minnesota and Everpeak Hospitality

canceled and then apologized for canceling ICE agents' reservations. A hotel's cancellation of ICE bookings, followed by corporate apologies, highlighted tensions between private businesses, federal law enforcement, and anti-discrimination norms. (*The Guardian* | 5 Jan 2026)

15. Investor Paul Singer acquired Citgo at a discount amid U.S. intervention in Venezuela. Singer's bargain purchase of Citgo, Venezuela's U.S. oil subsidiary, during a U.S.-driven crisis illustrated how foreign policy decisions can generate windfalls for politically connected investors. (*Meidas Plus* | 5 Jan 2026)

16. Environmental Protection Agency requested nominations for the Science Advisory Committee on Chemicals. Refreshing membership on the chemical advisory committee will shape the scientific advice guiding future chemical risk evaluations and regulations. (*Federal Register* | 5 Jan 2026)

17. Federal Communications Commission tightened rules for the Robocall Mitigation Database and imposed penalties for false filings. New FCC requirements for timely updates, recertification fees, and penalties aimed to strengthen enforcement against illegal robocalls and protect consumers from abusive communications. (*Federal Register* | 6 Jan 2026)

18. Environmental Protection Agency approved multiple state air quality plan revisions and boundary changes. EPA approvals and adjustments to air plans in California, Utah, Michigan, and Indiana altered regulatory obligations for local industries and advanced compliance with ozone and SO<sub>2</sub> standards. (*Federal Register* | 6 Jan 2026; 8 Jan 2026; 9 Jan 2026)

19. Occupational Safety and Health Administration issued corrections to the Hazard Communication Standard. OSHA's technical corrections to hazard communication rules aimed to prevent misclassification and labeling errors, supporting workplace safety and regulatory clarity. (*Federal Register* | 8 Jan 2026)

20. Environmental Protection Agency published a notice of availability for several Environmental Impact Statements and invited public comment. EPA's EIS notice enabled public review of major federal projects' environmental impacts, reinforcing participatory oversight in infrastructure and land-use decisions. (*Federal Register* | 9 Jan 2026)

21. Environmental Protection Agency proposed a settlement for cleanup at the Ward Transformer Superfund Site in North Carolina. The proposed agreement with Raleigh Durham Airport Authority for Superfund remediation and cost recovery advanced environmental cleanup while involving a local public entity in compliance. (*Federal Register* | 9 Jan 2026)

22. Environmental Protection Agency sought comment on renewing information collection for standardized RCRA hazardous waste permits.

Renewing data requirements for hazardous waste permits affects compliance costs and oversight of facilities handling dangerous materials. (Federal Register | 9 Jan 2026)

23. Environmental Protection Agency withdrew a direct final rule aligning hazardous chemical inventory reporting with updated OSHA standards after adverse comments. EPA's withdrawal in response to comments showed how stakeholder input can delay or reshape harmonization of chemical reporting rules that affect industry obligations. (Federal Register | 9 Jan 2026)

24. Drug Enforcement Administration received multiple applications for controlled substance importer registrations and opened public comment. Importer applications for LSD, Ecgonine, methylphenidate, and fentanyl for research and manufacturing highlighted DEA's gatekeeping role over controlled substances entering U.S. markets. (Federal Register | 8 Jan 2026)

25. Airbnb maintained its pledge to withhold political donations from election-denying lawmakers. By continuing to deny contributions to members who opposed 2020 certification, Airbnb used corporate giving policies to reinforce norms around accepting election results. (Popular Information (Judd Legum) | 6 Jan 2026)

26. Cigna resumed donations to lawmakers who voted to overturn the 2020 election despite a prior pledge. Cigna's renewed support for election objectors, while narrowing its pledge's scope, illustrated how corporate money can flow back to officials who challenged a peaceful transfer of power. (Popular Information (Judd Legum) | 6 Jan 2026)

27. Comcast broke its pledge by donating to election-denying lawmakers and Trump's inaugural fund. Comcast's large contributions to officials who opposed certification and to Trump's inauguration showed corporate willingness to prioritize access over earlier commitments to democratic norms. (Popular Information (Judd Legum) | 6 Jan 2026)

28. Farmers Insurance continued to withhold donations from members of Congress who voted to overturn the 2020 election. Farmers' sustained refusal to fund election deniers contrasted with peers that reversed course, demonstrating that corporate political spending can be aligned with democratic commitments. (Popular Information (Judd Legum) | 6 Jan 2026)

29. General Mills resumed political donations to lawmakers who opposed certifying the 2020 election. General Mills' renewed giving to election objectors after a suspension period reflected how corporate pledges made after January 6 can erode over time under political and business pressures. (Popular Information (Judd Legum) | 6 Jan 2026)

30. Trump family's World Liberty Financial applied for a national banking license from the Office of the Comptroller of the Currency. The

Trump family's bid for a bank charter for its crypto venture raised conflict-of-interest concerns about a former president's business seeking federal financial privileges. (Letters from an American (Heather Cox Richardson) | 8 Jan 2026)

31. Former President Donald Trump requested \$6.2 million in legal fees from Fulton County after charges were dismissed. Trump's demand that a local government reimburse his defense costs in an election interference case highlighted efforts by powerful defendants to shift legal expenses onto public budgets. (Letters from an American (Heather Cox Richardson) | 8 Jan 2026)

32. New York City and New York State leadership announced a universal child care plan providing two years of free care for two-year-olds. The universal child care initiative expanded public support for early childhood care, easing burdens on working families and reshaping the local welfare state. (Meidas Plus | 8 Jan 2026)

33. The Trump Administration relaxed the U.S. embargo on Venezuelan oil, granting U.S. control over sales and benefiting Gulf Coast refineries. Easing the embargo to allow 30–50 million barrels of Venezuelan crude into U.S. markets, with Washington controlling sales, advantaged firms like Citgo and intertwined foreign policy with private profit. (Popular Information (Judd Legum) | 8 Jan 2026)

34. President Donald Trump and Energy Secretary Chris Wright outlined a strategy for U.S. oil companies to invest heavily in rebuilding Venezuela's oil sector under U.S. protection. Promises of "total safety" and long-term control over Venezuelan oil to entice \$100 billion in private investment showed how U.S. policy was structured to secure corporate gains from regime change. (The Guardian; Letters from an American (Heather Cox Richardson); Meidas Plus | 6 Jan 2026; 7 Jan 2026; 8 Jan 2026; 9 Jan 2026)

35. The Trump Administration announced plans to revive Venezuela's oil industry using U.S. taxpayer funds with later reimbursement to companies. Proposing public financing for risky foreign oil projects, with eventual payback to firms, shifted political and financial risk onto taxpayers while privatizing potential profits. (Meidas Plus | 6 Jan 2026)

36. The Trump Administration unveiled a new food pyramid encouraging alcohol use and removed science-based childhood vaccine recommendations. Rewriting federal dietary guidance to promote alcohol and omit vaccines prioritized economic productivity narratives over evidence-based public health, with long-term social and economic costs. (Meidas Plus | 7 Jan 2026)

37. The Trump Administration revoked billions of dollars in childcare funding as part of broader social service cuts. Eliminating major childcare

funds threatened access to essential care for working families, deepening economic inequality and weakening support for caregivers. (Meidas Plus | 7 Jan 2026)

38. The Trump Administration removed federal guidance on childhood vaccines. Stripping official vaccine recommendations risked lowering immunization rates and increasing preventable disease, with significant implications for workforce stability and healthcare costs. (Meidas Plus | 7 Jan 2026)

39. The Trump Administration under DHS Secretary Kristi Noem drafted plans to cut FEMA's workforce by more than 50%. Proposed deep FEMA staff reductions threatened federal disaster response capacity, shifting more risk and recovery burdens onto states, localities, and individuals. (The Guardian | 8 Jan 2026)

40. California advocates and state officials advanced a ballot proposal for a one-time 5% tax on billionaires to fund social programs. The proposed wealth tax to support education, food, and healthcare would significantly redistribute resources from ultra-wealthy residents, provoking debate over competitiveness and fiscal justice. (The Guardian | 9 Jan 2026)

41. The Trump Administration and Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent backed a large defense budget increase justified partly by cutting fraud. Linking a \$500 billion defense hike to vague anti-fraud savings raised concerns about fiscal realism and the opportunity cost for domestic investments. (Meidas Plus | 8 Jan 2026)

42. The Trump Administration relaxed Venezuelan oil embargo terms in ways that benefited Citgo and aligned investors. Policy changes that boosted the value of Citgo, recently acquired by a Trump ally, illustrated how sanctions and embargo decisions can be structured to favor specific private actors. (Meidas Plus; Popular Information (Judd Legum) | 5 Jan 2026; 8 Jan 2026)

43. Bureau of Labor Statistics and Trump administration released a weak December jobs report amid allegations that Trump leaked confidential data early. A poor year for job growth, combined with claims that Trump shared jobs numbers before release, raised concerns about both economic performance and politicization of market-moving data. (Meidas Plus | 9 Jan 2026)

44. Biden administration failed to deliver a promised nationwide EV charging network due to contracting requirements. Implementation problems that stalled EV charger deployment undermined climate and industrial policy goals, discouraging EV adoption and weakening U.S. competitiveness. (Noahpinion (Noah Smith) | 9 Jan 2026)

45. Ford Motor Company canceled several electric vehicle models and shifted some projects to hybrids or energy storage. Ford's retreat from EVs, including converting a battery plant to storage uses, signaled industry doubts

about U.S. EV demand and policy support, with implications for jobs and climate goals. (Noahpinion (Noah Smith) | 9 Jan 2026)

46. The Trump Administration canceled subsidies for electric vehicles and weakened efficiency standards that encouraged EV adoption. Rolling back EV incentives and standards reduced consumer support for cleaner vehicles, favoring incumbent fossil-fuel technologies and affecting the auto industry's transition. (Noahpinion (Noah Smith) | 9 Jan 2026)

47. U.S. automakers other than Tesla shifted production away from electric vehicles toward gas-powered models and repurposed EV plants. Major automakers' move back to gasoline vehicles, including layoffs and plant conversions, weakened U.S. positioning in the global EV market and affected manufacturing employment. (Noahpinion (Noah Smith) | 9 Jan 2026)

## **Information, Memory, and Manipulation**

1. President Donald Trump posted on social media promising U.S. rescue if Iran violently suppressed protests. Trump's public statements about intervening in Iranian protests signaled a willingness to frame foreign unrest through U.S. power, influencing perceptions of American intentions abroad. (Letters from an American (Heather Cox Richardson) | 3 Jan 2026)

2. Secretary of State Marco Rubio framed U.S. strikes in Venezuela as a law enforcement operation while acknowledging economic leverage. Rubio's portrayal of a large-scale military raid as mere law enforcement, alongside talk of oil leverage, blurred categories of war and policing in public discourse. (Letters from an American (Heather Cox Richardson) | 5 Jan 2026)

3. President Donald Trump claimed military intervention in Venezuela was necessary to rebuild a failed state and maintain U.S. control in the hemisphere. Trump's justification of intervention as benevolent rebuilding and regional control shaped public narratives that normalize regime change as a tool of U.S. leadership. (Letters from an American (Heather Cox Richardson) | 5 Jan 2026)

4. President Donald Trump threatened Venezuelan officials with severe consequences if they did not comply with U.S. demands. Public threats against foreign officials reinforced a coercive narrative around U.S. involvement in Venezuela, influencing both domestic and international perceptions of American power. (Letters from an American (Heather Cox Richardson) | 5 Jan 2026)

5. U.S. Department of Homeland Security and ICE quickly labeled the Minneapolis shooting of Renee Nicole Good as self-defense and domestic terrorism. Federal officials' early framing of the shooting as terrorism and

self-defense, later contradicted by video, illustrated how official narratives can pre-empt scrutiny of state violence. (The 50501 Movement; The Guardian | 7 Jan 2026; 9 Jan 2026)

6. Reuters and independent media verified video footage showing Renee Good's vehicle moving away from agents when she was shot. Media verification of video contradicting DHS claims underscored the role of independent journalism in challenging official accounts of law enforcement shootings. (The 50501 Movement | 7 Jan 2026)

7. Vice President JD Vance defended the ICE officer in the Minneapolis shooting and accused media of misrepresenting the incident. Vance's attack on media coverage and unsupported claims about a leftwing terror network exemplified efforts to discredit critical reporting and reframe a controversial killing as justified. (The Guardian | 8 Jan 2026)

8. The Trump Administration and allied media spread misleading claims that Renee Good was a domestic terrorist despite contrary evidence. Coordinated messaging portraying Good as a terrorist, amplified by right-wing outlets, showed how state and partisan media can jointly distort facts to justify lethal force. (The Guardian | 9 Jan 2026)

9. The Trump Administration recast the January 6 Capitol attack as a peaceful patriotic protest and vilified Democrats for certifying the election. Officially rewriting the events of January 6 inverted responsibility for the attack and attempted to reshape collective memory of a key democratic crisis. (Letters from an American (Heather Cox Richardson) | 7 Jan 2026)

10. U.S. Department of Justice under Attorney General Pam Bondi failed to comply with the Epstein Files Transparency Act by withholding over 99% of documents and required reports. DOJ's admission that it had not released most Epstein files or provided mandated justifications signaled institutional resistance to exposing information about elite-linked crimes. (Letters from an American (Heather Cox Richardson); The Guardian; Meidas Plus; Popular Information (Judd Legum) | 4 Jan 2026; 6 Jan 2026; 7 Jan 2026; 9 Jan 2026)

11. The Trump Administration and FBI took over the Minneapolis ICE shooting investigation and limited state access to evidence. Federal control of the investigation, coupled with exclusion of Minnesota's BCA, concentrated information about the shooting within agencies aligned with the officer, raising fears of narrative management. (The Guardian; Letters from an American (Heather Cox Richardson) | 8 Jan 2026; 9 Jan 2026)

12. The Trump Administration withheld an unredacted list of officials and politically exposed persons named in Epstein files from Congress. By not providing a complete list of implicated officials, DOJ limited lawmakers' ability to investigate potential misconduct by elites connected to Epstein.

(The Guardian; Letters from an American (Heather Cox Richardson) | 6 Jan 2026; 9 Jan 2026)

13. The Trump Administration allegedly leaked confidential jobs data before official release, affecting market expectations. Claims that Trump shared sensitive employment figures early raised concerns about using privileged economic data for political or financial advantage. (Meidas Plus | 9 Jan 2026)

14. The Trump Administration and allied media personalities framed the Venezuela operation as a success for U.S. security and interests despite legal concerns. Supportive coverage of Maduro's abduction by conservative media, even amid questions about legality, helped normalize regime-change tactics in public opinion. (The Guardian | 7 Jan 2026)

15. The Trump Administration used overlapping crises and rapid policy moves in Venezuela, Greenland, immigration, and transparency to fragment public focus. Simultaneous escalations in foreign interventions, ICE surges, and defiance of transparency laws created a chaotic information environment that made sustained oversight more difficult. (Noahpinion (Noah Smith); The Guardian; Letters from an American (Heather Cox Richardson); Democracy Outloud (Karen Zeigler); Meidas Plus; Popular Information (Judd Legum); The 50501 Movement | 3 Jan 2026; 4 Jan 2026; 5 Jan 2026; 6 Jan 2026; 7 Jan 2026; 8 Jan 2026; 9 Jan 2026)

16. The Trump Administration withdrew the U.S. from the UNFCCC and 65 other international organizations, altering global information flows on climate. Leaving key international bodies reduced U.S. participation in shared climate data and policy forums, weakening multilateral information exchange on global public goods. (The Guardian | 8 Jan 2026)

17. Meidas and polling organizations reported that German trust in the U.S. had fallen to levels comparable to trust in Russia. Polling showing steep declines in allied trust reflected how U.S. foreign policy narratives and actions were reshaping global perceptions of American reliability. (Meidas Plus | 9 Jan 2026)

18. The Trump Administration removed science-based vaccine guidance and promoted alcohol in dietary messaging, downplaying public health evidence. Altering official health guidance to favor ideological or economic narratives over evidence risked confusing the public and undermining trust in expert information. (Meidas Plus | 7 Jan 2026)

19. U.S. government and allied actors used selective release and framing of bodycam and cellphone footage from the Minneapolis shooting. The White House's sharing of video from the ICE agent's perspective, contrasted with independent footage, showed how curated visuals can be used to justify offi-

cial narratives. (The Guardian; The 50501 Movement; Meidas Plus | 9 Jan 2026)

20. U.S. government and courts used U.S. prosecutions of Nicolás Maduro to frame the Venezuela intervention as a criminal justice matter. Charging Maduro as a narco-terrorist in U.S. courts helped recast a contested military operation as a law enforcement action, influencing public understanding of the intervention. (The Guardian; Meidas Plus | 5 Jan 2026; 6 Jan 2026)

21. U.S. government and allied corporations allowed companies that had pledged to avoid funding election deniers to quietly resume such donations. Corporate reversals by Cigna, Comcast, and General Mills on funding election objectors contributed to a normalization of anti-certification politics in the campaign finance system. (Popular Information (Judd Legum) | 6 Jan 2026)

22. U.S. government and economic advisors downplayed poor jobs data by blaming the numbers rather than policy choices. Officials' efforts to attribute weak employment figures to data issues rather than governance decisions illustrated how economic statistics can be spun to protect political narratives. (Meidas Plus | 9 Jan 2026)

23. U.S. government and intelligence community excluded Director of National Intelligence Tulsi Gabbard from Venezuela planning meetings. Leaving the DNI out of key discussions, reportedly due to her views, limited institutional input into foreign policy and raised concerns about politicized information flows at the top of government. (Meidas Plus | 8 Jan 2026)

24. U.S. officials discussed offering lump-sum payments to Greenlanders to encourage secession from Denmark. Proposals to pay Greenland residents to support U.S. annexation plans reflected attempts to shape political outcomes through financial inducements and messaging about self-determination. (Meidas Plus | 8 Jan 2026)

25. U.S. government and Venezuelan opposition figures amplified appeals from opposition leader Maria Corina Machado for U.S. support in ousting Venezuela's government. Media appearances by Machado thanking Trump and urging intervention helped frame U.S. involvement as backing democratic forces, complicating public understanding of the intervention's legality and motives. (Meidas Plus | 6 Jan 2026)

26. U.S. government and polling organizations documented strong public opposition to the Venezuela invasion while the administration pressed ahead. The divergence between polling and policy highlighted how executive narratives can override or ignore public sentiment in justifying foreign interventions. (Letters from an American (Heather Cox Richardson) | 5 Jan 2026)

27. U.S. government and Aldrich Ames's case history marked the death of

a notorious CIA spy whose espionage had exposed major intelligence vulnerabilities. Ames's death recalled one of the most damaging intelligence breaches in U.S. history, underscoring long-term challenges in safeguarding classified information. (The Guardian | 7 Jan 2026)

28. U.S. government and courts used limited release of Epstein files to shape public understanding while keeping most records sealed. Releasing only a small subset of Epstein documents allowed officials to claim progress while maintaining secrecy over many politically sensitive details. (The Guardian; Letters from an American (Heather Cox Richardson); Meidas Plus; Popular Information (Judd Legum) | 6 Jan 2026; 7 Jan 2026; 9 Jan 2026)

29. U.S. government and economic planners linked defense spending increases and foreign oil seizures to optimistic claims about tariffs and fraud reduction. Narratives that military expansion and foreign resource control would be funded painlessly through tariffs and anti-fraud efforts obscured trade-offs and fiscal risks. (Letters from an American (Heather Cox Richardson); Meidas Plus | 8 Jan 2026)

30. U.S. government and Venezuelan authorities framed post-coup repression in Venezuela as a consequence of U.S. intervention. Reporting that Venezuelan authorities detained journalists and protesters after the U.S. operation highlighted how interventions can reshape information environments and civil liberties abroad. (Letters from an American (Heather Cox Richardson) | 7 Jan 2026)



## CHAPTER 26

### **WEEK 52 (10 JAN 2026 – 16 JAN 2026): OCCUPATION AS GOVERNANCE**

*A federal immigration surge turns Minnesota into a test site for domestic force, legal impunity, and curated memory, even as states and courts push back.*

This week reveals a clear merging of authoritarian tools centered on immigration enforcement, foreign adventures, and information control. The Minneapolis-St. Paul ICE surge, the killing of Renee Nicole Good, and subsequent shootings are key examples: federal agents deployed on an unprecedented scale, used lethal force, altered crime scenes, impeded state investigators, and were protected by DOJ decisions and smear campaigns. At the same time, actions like threatening the Fed chair with criminal charges, politicized investigations of lawmakers and whistleblower advisers, and the FBI raid on a Washington Post reporter illustrate the weaponization of law and security agencies. Internationally, the Venezuela operation, seizure of oil revenues, and open discussions of invading or annexing Greenland—supported by tariffs and NATO-skeptical rhetoric—show an expansionist, transactional foreign policy combining crony capitalism with militarized influence. There is notable resistance—state lawsuits, ACLU class actions, congressional hearings, impeachment efforts, and mass protests—but these mainly serve as reactive checks against a rapidly consolidating executive-led regime.

## Power and Authority

1. The Trump Administration seized control of Venezuelan oil and its revenues without full congressional involvement. The administration's unilateral seizure and personal control of Venezuelan oil revenue bypassed normal congressional oversight, concentrating foreign economic power in the executive and weakening checks on how seized assets are used. (Letters from an American (Heather Cox Richardson) | 10 Jan 2026)

2. President Donald Trump withheld \$129 billion in federal funding from Minnesota citing alleged fraud. Trump's move to cut massive federal funds to Minnesota in the midst of an immigration crackdown used fiscal power to punish a disfavored state, pressuring local authorities and residents through economic coercion. (Letters from an American (Heather Cox Richardson) | 10 Jan 2026)

3. President Donald Trump declared a national emergency over Venezuelan oil revenue and blocked repayments. By framing Venezuelan oil revenue as a national emergency and blocking repayments via executive order, Trump expanded emergency economic powers with limited oversight, normalizing crisis tools for long-term foreign asset control. (Letters from an American (Heather Cox Richardson) | 12 Jan 2026)

4. President Donald Trump threatened criminal charges against Federal Reserve Chair Jerome Powell over interest rates. Trump's threat to criminally prosecute the Fed chair for not cutting rates politicized independent monetary policy, signaling willingness to use prosecutorial power to coerce economic decisions that should be insulated from partisan demands. (Letters from an American (Heather Cox Richardson) | 12 Jan 2026)

5. Department of Homeland Security created a Program Executive Office for unmanned aircraft and counter-UAS systems. DHS's new drone and counter-drone office expanded federal surveillance and enforcement capabilities, increasing executive tools for monitoring and controlling borders and domestic airspace with limited external oversight. (Meidas Plus | 12 Jan 2026)

6. President Donald Trump announced a 25% tariff on any country doing business with Iran. Trump's unilateral global tariff threat against countries trading with Iran used U.S. market power as a coercive foreign policy tool, risking trade retaliation and bypassing broader legislative debate on sanctions strategy. (The Guardian | 12 Jan 2026)

7. Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth formally censured Senator Mark Kelly and ordered an investigation into reducing his retirement grade. Hegseth's censure and push to downgrade Senator Kelly's military rank for criticizing unlawful orders blurred lines between civilian oversight and military disci-

pline, signaling executive willingness to punish legislators through military channels. (Letters from an American (Heather Cox Richardson) | 13 Jan 2026)

8. President Donald Trump publicly threatened Minnesota with a coming "day of reckoning and retribution". Trump's threat of a "day of reckoning" for Minnesota amid ICE operations used presidential rhetoric to intimidate a dissenting state, reinforcing the idea that federal power may be wielded punitively against political opponents. (Meidas Plus | 13 Jan 2026)

9. President Donald Trump threatened to invoke the Insurrection Act in Minnesota to respond to protests. Trump's repeated threats to deploy the military under the Insurrection Act against Minnesota protesters signaled readiness to treat civil dissent as insurrection, eroding norms that separate domestic policing from military force. (The Guardian; Letters from an American (Heather Cox Richardson) | 15 Jan 2026; 16 Jan 2026)

10. President Donald Trump refused to extend Affordable Care Act premium subsidies. The administration's refusal to extend ACA subsidies risked pricing many people out of coverage, using executive inaction on health policy to reshape access to care without new legislation. (Meidas Plus | 16 Jan 2026)

11. President Donald Trump publicly defended the ICE agent who killed Renee Good and labeled her a domestic terrorist. By defending the ICE agent and branding Renee Good and her wife as "domestic terrorists" before investigations concluded, Trump signaled executive backing for lethal force and framed critics as enemies of the state. (Letters from an American (Heather Cox Richardson) | 16 Jan 2026)

## **Institutions and Governance**

1. Department of Homeland Security Secretary Kristi Noem implemented a policy restricting congressional oversight visits to ICE facilities. Noem's policy limiting members of Congress from visiting ICE facilities curtailed legislative oversight of detention conditions, weakening a key accountability mechanism over federal enforcement operations. (Letters from an American (Heather Cox Richardson) | 10 Jan 2026)

2. UK Justice Secretary David Lammy prepared reforms that would cancel thousands of jury trials. Planned UK court reforms to cancel large numbers of jury trials raised concerns about access to impartial adjudication and the preservation of a core check on state power in criminal proceedings. (The Guardian | 10 Jan 2026)

3. US Congress enacted the Epstein Files Transparency Act mandating DOJ release of Epstein records. Congress's Epstein Files Transparency Act

sought to force disclosure of sensitive investigative records, but DOJ's noncompliance highlighted tensions between legislative transparency mandates and executive secrecy. (Letters from an American (Heather Cox Richardson) | 12 Jan 2026)

4. Representatives Ro Khanna and Thomas Massie asked a federal judge to appoint a special master and monitor to enforce Epstein files law. Bipartisan lawmakers turned to the courts to compel DOJ compliance with the Epstein transparency statute, underscoring legislative reliance on judicial remedies when executive agencies ignore disclosure laws. (Letters from an American (Heather Cox Richardson) | 12 Jan 2026)

5. US Senate advanced a bill to limit Trump's ability to take military action in Venezuela without approval. The Senate's move to require congressional authorization for further Venezuela military action attempted to reassert war powers, though its later defeat showed the fragility of legislative checks on executive force. (Letters from an American (Heather Cox Richardson) | 12 Jan 2026)

6. US Senate unanimously approved installing a plaque honoring Capitol Police for January 6 defense. The Senate's unanimous decision to honor Capitol Police for defending Congress on January 6 symbolically reinforced institutional memory of the insurrection and support for those who protected the legislature. (Letters from an American (Heather Cox Richardson) | 12 Jan 2026)

7. House Judiciary Committee Republicans released the transcript of former special counsel Jack Smith's testimony. Publishing Jack Smith's testimony, which asserted proof beyond a reasonable doubt of Trump's criminal schemes, injected detailed allegations into the public record and congressional discourse about presidential accountability. (Letters from an American (Heather Cox Richardson) | 12 Jan 2026)

8. House committee led by Rep. Jamie Raskin opened an investigation into whether pardoned January 6 rioters were hired by ICE. The House inquiry into possible hiring of pardoned insurrectionists by ICE probed whether federal enforcement agencies were being staffed with individuals who had attacked democratic institutions. (Meidas Plus | 12 Jan 2026)

9. House Minority Leader Hakeem Jeffries warned Democrats might oppose DHS supplemental funding absent ICE accountability measures. Jeffries' stance tied DHS funding to reforms on ICE conduct, using budget leverage to demand that immigration enforcement align with broader law-enforcement norms and transparency. (Meidas Plus | 12 Jan 2026)

10. Department of Justice subpoenaed the Federal Reserve in a criminal investigation of Chair Jerome Powell. DOJ's subpoena of the Fed over

building renovations, amid presidential pressure on rates, blurred lines between legitimate oversight and political intimidation of an independent central bank. (*The Guardian* | 12 Jan 2026)

11. US Supreme Court rejected Trump's claim of authority to deploy federalized National Guard in Illinois. The Court's decision limiting Trump's ability to federalize National Guard troops for domestic deployment reinforced judicial checks on unilateral presidential use of military forces inside the country. (*Letters from an American* (Heather Cox Richardson) | 12 Jan 2026)

12. US Senate defeated a war powers resolution restricting further military action in Venezuela. The Senate's narrow rejection of a resolution to require approval for Venezuela operations, after administration lobbying, preserved broad presidential discretion over foreign military actions. (*The Guardian* | 15 Jan 2026)

13. House Oversight Committee Chair James Comer moved to hold Bill and Hillary Clinton in contempt for defying Epstein subpoenas. Comer's push to hold the Clintons in contempt for ignoring Epstein-related subpoenas highlighted partisan use of congressional contempt powers amid broader disputes over DOJ's failure to release Epstein files. (*The Guardian*; *Letters from an American* (Heather Cox Richardson) | 13 Jan 2026; 14 Jan 2026; 16 Jan 2026)

14. US Congress considered the Save NATO Act to limit presidential authority to invade NATO allies. The Save NATO Act sought to constrain Trump's ability to attack NATO partners unilaterally, reflecting legislative concern that presidential war powers could be used to undermine core alliances. (*Meidas Plus* | 14 Jan 2026)

15. US Supreme Court heard challenges to state bans on transgender girls in girls' sports. The Court's review of trans athlete bans in Idaho and West Virginia put federal equal protection and Title IX interpretations at stake, with potential to reshape civil rights protections for transgender students nationwide. (*The Guardian* | 12 Jan 2026; 13 Jan 2026)

16. US Supreme Court heard a case on Trump's global trade tariffs under emergency economic powers. By taking up challenges to Trump's sweeping tariffs imposed via emergency powers, the Court confronted how far presidents can go in reshaping trade policy without new legislation. (*The Guardian* | 13 Jan 2026)

17. US Supreme Court revived a Republican challenge to Illinois's extended mail-in ballot deadline. The Court's decision granting candidates standing to contest Illinois's mail-ballot receipt window opened new avenues

for partisan litigation over election rules, potentially affecting mail voting nationwide. (The Guardian | 14 Jan 2026)

18. US Supreme Court agreed to hear cases on state bans of transgender athletes in girls' sports. Oral arguments on trans athlete bans signaled the Court's willingness to revisit how sex discrimination laws apply to gender identity, with implications for school policies and civil rights enforcement. (The Guardian | 13 Jan 2026)

19. US District Judge Amir H Ali ordered restoration of whistleblower attorney Mark Zaid's security clearance. Judge Ali's injunction reversing the politically motivated revocation of Mark Zaid's clearance reaffirmed judicial checks on executive retaliation against lawyers representing whistleblowers and government critics. (The Guardian | 13 Jan 2026)

20. US District Judge Paul Engelmayer ordered DOJ to explain noncompliance with the Epstein Files Transparency Act. Engelmayer's order requiring DOJ to justify its failure to release Epstein records underscored judicial willingness to enforce transparency statutes against a resistant executive branch. (Meidas Plus | 13 Jan 2026)

21. US Court of Appeals for the Ninth Circuit upheld California's Prop 50 redistricting maps favoring Latino representation. The appeals court's decision to uphold Prop 50's temporary congressional maps validated a state-level effort to adjust districts in ways that could benefit Latino voters and Democrats, intensifying partisan redistricting battles. (The Guardian | 14 Jan 2026)

22. US Supreme Court allowed a lawsuit challenging Illinois mail-in ballot law to proceed. By reviving Rep. Mike Bost's suit over Illinois mail-ballot counting rules, the Court expanded candidate standing to contest election administration, potentially inviting more litigation over state voting laws. (The Guardian | 14 Jan 2026)

23. US District Judge William Young announced a protective order for noncitizen academics targeted over pro-Palestinian speech. Judge Young's planned order shielding noncitizen academics from retaliatory immigration actions for their speech checked executive attempts to use immigration powers to silence political expression. (The Guardian | 16 Jan 2026)

24. US District Court in California rejected DOJ's demand for sensitive voter data from the state. A federal judge's ruling that DOJ was not entitled to Californians' birth dates and partial Social Security numbers to police voter rolls protected state control over election data and voter privacy from federal overreach. (The Guardian | 16 Jan 2026)

25. US Department of Justice declined to open a civil-rights investigation into the killing of Renee Nicole Good. DOJ's refusal to investigate the ICE killing of Renee Good as a civil-rights matter, despite internal resignations,

signaled institutional reluctance to scrutinize federal agents' use of force against civilians. (*The 50501 Movement* | 16 Jan 2026)

26. State of Minnesota and cities of Minneapolis and St. Paul filed lawsuits to halt DHS's Operation Metro Surge immigration crackdown. Minnesota and its major cities sued to stop Operation Metro Surge, alleging unconstitutional stops, detentions, and racial profiling, using the courts to contest federal immigration tactics in their communities. (*The Guardian*; *Letters from an American* (Heather Cox Richardson); *The 50501 Movement* | 12 Jan 2026; 13 Jan 2026; 14 Jan 2026; 16 Jan 2026)

27. US Department of Justice investigated the shooting of Renee Good as an assault on a federal officer rather than a civil-rights case. By framing the Good shooting primarily as an assault on a federal officer, DOJ prioritized protection of federal agents over examination of potential civil-rights violations, shaping legal accountability pathways. (*Letters from an American* (Heather Cox Richardson) | 14 Jan 2026)

28. State of Illinois sued DHS over alleged unlawful and dangerous tactics in Operation Midway Blitz. Illinois's lawsuit accusing CBP and ICE of warrantless violent detentions and chemical weapon use during Operation Midway Blitz highlighted state efforts to check federal enforcement practices through litigation. (*Letters from an American* (Heather Cox Richardson) | 14 Jan 2026)

29. US Department of Justice Civil Rights Division leadership resigned after being barred from investigating the Renee Good shooting. Resignations by senior Civil Rights Division officials over orders not to probe the Good killing exposed internal resistance to politicized decision-making and weakened DOJ's capacity to enforce civil-rights law. (*Meidas Plus*; *The Guardian*; *The 50501 Movement* | 12 Jan 2026; 13 Jan 2026; 14 Jan 2026; 16 Jan 2026)

30. US Department of Justice fired a senior federal prosecutor who refused to prosecute James Comey. DOJ's dismissal of Robert McBride after he declined to prosecute former FBI Director Comey, amid questions about the U.S. attorney's appointment, suggested political interference in prosecutorial decisions. (*Meidas Plus* | 12 Jan 2026)

31. US Attorney's Office for the District of Columbia opened a criminal investigation into Federal Reserve Chair Jerome Powell over building renovations. The criminal probe into Powell's testimony about Fed renovations, launched amid Trump's rate-cut demands, raised concerns that prosecutorial tools were being used to pressure an independent economic institution. (*Letters from an American* (Heather Cox Richardson); *Meidas Plus*; *Noahpinion* (Noah Smith) | 12 Jan 2026; 13 Jan 2026)

32. US Department of Justice sued 23 states and DC to obtain sensitive

voter information for roll reviews. DOJ's lawsuits seeking detailed voter data, including partial Social Security numbers, under the banner of roll accuracy alarmed states and advocates who saw the effort as a pretext for voter intimidation and centralization. (The Guardian | 15 Jan 2026)

33. US Department of Justice appealed an injunction limiting DHS dispersal of journalists at protests. DHS's appeal of a court order protecting journalists from dispersal at protests challenged judicial safeguards for press freedom in protest coverage, seeking broader discretion for federal officers. (The Guardian | 12 Jan 2026)

34. Federal judiciary issued an injunction barring DHS from dispersing known journalists without probable cause. The injunction restricting DHS from dispersing journalists absent independent probable cause strengthened legal protections for newsgathering at protests against arbitrary federal interference. (The Guardian | 12 Jan 2026)

35. US District Court of Appeals for the Third Circuit reversed a ruling that freed Palestinian activist Mahmoud Khalil from ICE detention. The appeals court's decision that lower courts lacked jurisdiction over Khalil's detention claims deferred to restrictive immigration statutes, limiting judicial avenues for activists contesting politically tinged deportations. (The Guardian | 15 Jan 2026)

36. US District Court in Florida received BBC's motion to dismiss Trump's \$10 billion defamation lawsuit. The BBC's motion to dismiss Trump's massive defamation suit over January 6 coverage tested how courts balance public-figure speech protections against attempts by powerful actors to chill investigative reporting. (The Guardian | 13 Jan 2026)

37. US Department of Justice investigated Democratic lawmakers over a video urging troops to refuse illegal orders. Federal prosecutors' investigation of House Democrats for a video emphasizing duty to disobey unlawful orders used criminal inquiry tools against protected political speech about military law and oversight. (The Guardian | 15 Jan 2026)

38. US Department of War and Navy leadership investigated Senator Mark Kelly for alleged misconduct over comments on illegal orders. Military investigations into Senator Kelly's public remarks about refusing illegal orders risked turning military justice mechanisms into instruments for disciplining civilian legislators' oversight speech. (Letters from an American (Heather Cox Richardson) | 13 Jan 2026)

39. US Equal Employment Opportunity Commission scheduled public meetings to revise internal voting procedures and harassment guidance. EEOC's announced meetings on rescinding voting procedures and harassment guidance signaled potential shifts in how the agency makes decisions

and enforces workplace protections. (*Federal Register* | 13 Jan 2026; 16 Jan 2026)

40. US Congress enacted the Whole Milk for Healthy Kids Act allowing whole milk in schools. The new law permitting whole milk in school meals illustrated congressional involvement in detailed nutrition policy, with implications for public health standards in federally supported programs. (*Congress.gov* | 14 Jan 2026)

41. US Congress in 1784 ratified the Treaty of Paris recognizing US independence. The 1784 ratification of the Treaty of Paris formally established US sovereignty and set early precedents for congressional authority over foreign agreements and national boundaries. (*Letters from an American* (Heather Cox Richardson) | 15 Jan 2026)

42. US Department of Justice released less than 1% of Epstein files despite a statutory deadline. DOJ's minimal release of Epstein records in defiance of a clear legal deadline exemplified executive resistance to transparency mandates in cases implicating powerful figures. (*Letters from an American* (Heather Cox Richardson) | 16 Jan 2026)

## **Civil Rights and Dissent**

1. ICE and facility operators near Minneapolis blocked members of Congress from visiting a detention center despite a court ruling. Denying entry to Representatives Omar, Morrison, and Craig at an ICE facility, contrary to a judge's ruling, impeded congressional oversight of detainee treatment and transparency in immigration enforcement. (*The Guardian* | 10 Jan 2026)

2. Homeland Security Investigations and ICE conducted large-scale door-to-door immigration raids in Minneapolis–St. Paul. Operation Metro Surge's business and residential raids by thousands of agents created an atmosphere of intimidation, raising due-process concerns and chilling daily life in immigrant communities. (*The 50501 Movement*; *Letters from an American* (Heather Cox Richardson) | 10 Jan 2026; 12 Jan 2026; 13 Jan 2026; 16 Jan 2026)

3. FBI and Department of Justice took over the investigation of Renee Good's killing and excluded state authorities. By sidelining Minnesota's Bureau of Criminal Apprehension and limiting local access to evidence in the Good case, federal authorities undermined independent scrutiny of lethal force by an ICE agent. (*The Guardian*; *Popular Information* (Judd Legum) | 10 Jan 2026; 11 Jan 2026; 12 Jan 2026; 13 Jan 2026)

4. FBI limited cooperation with local law enforcement in the Renee Good shooting case. FBI's restricted sharing of evidence with local prosecutors in

the Good shooting complicated potential charges against the ICE agent, weakening local capacity to hold federal officers accountable. (The Guardian | 10 Jan 2026)

5. Oregon Attorney General Dan Rayfield opened a state investigation into federal agents' shooting of undocumented immigrants. Oregon's probe into border agents' shooting of two undocumented people in Portland asserted state interest in policing federal use of force and protecting civil liberties. (The Guardian | 10 Jan 2026)

6. White House publicly defended ICE agent Jonathan Ross's killing of Renee Good as self-defense. The administration's early defense of the ICE shooter, despite conflicting video evidence, signaled institutional bias toward agents and discouraged impartial investigation of lethal force. (The Guardian | 10 Jan 2026)

7. ICE detained four members of the Oglala Lakota Nation in Minnesota. ICE's detention of Indigenous Oglala Lakota members during the Minnesota surge highlighted how aggressive enforcement disproportionately affects marginalized communities with historic vulnerabilities. (Letters from an American (Heather Cox Richardson) | 10 Jan 2026)

8. Protesters and community groups nationwide organized over 1,000 "ICE Out For Good" protests and vigils. Coordinated protests across the country against ICE raids and deaths in custody demonstrated large-scale civic mobilization challenging federal enforcement practices and demanding immigrant protections. (The 50501 Movement; Letters from an American (Heather Cox Richardson); The Guardian | 10 Jan 2026; 11 Jan 2026; 16 Jan 2026)

9. Protesters in Portland, Oregon demonstrated against border patrol shootings and saw six arrests. Portland protests over border agents shooting two undocumented immigrants, and the arrest of six demonstrators, underscored tensions between federal enforcement and local communities' rights to assemble. (The Guardian | 10 Jan 2026)

10. Minnesota Attorney General Keith Ellison and Hennepin County Attorney Mary Moriarty launched a state investigation into the ICE killing of Renee Good. Minnesota's decision to investigate Good's killing challenged federal claims of "absolute immunity" for officers and asserted state jurisdiction over lethal force used on its residents. (The 50501 Movement | 11 Jan 2026)

11. ICE deported Randall Gamboa Esquivel to Costa Rica while he was in a vegetative state. ICE's deportation of a gravely ill detainee who soon died raised serious concerns about medical neglect, humane treatment, and transparency toward families in immigration detention. (The Guardian | 11 Jan 2026)

12. ICE recorded four migrant deaths in custody in the first ten days of

2026. A spate of early-year deaths in ICE detention, following a record fatality year, highlighted systemic problems in detention conditions and oversight of detainee health and safety. (The 50501 Movement | 12 Jan 2026)

13. Department of Justice Civil Rights Division and Minnesota federal prosecutors saw mass resignations over refusal to investigate the Renee Good shooting. Resignations by DOJ civil-rights leaders and Minnesota prosecutors after orders not to probe Good's killing signaled internal alarm that civil-rights enforcement was being subordinated to political protection of ICE. (Meidas Plus; The Guardian; The 50501 Movement | 12 Jan 2026; 13 Jan 2026; 14 Jan 2026; 16 Jan 2026)

14. Department of Justice rescinded guidance discouraging prosecution of simple cannabis possession. DOJ's rollback of Biden-era cannabis guidance reopened the door to federal prosecutions for simple possession, with disproportionate impacts likely on marginalized communities already over-policed. (The Guardian | 12 Jan 2026)

15. Siskiyou County, California agreed to policing reforms and independent oversight after racial profiling lawsuit. Siskiyou County's settlement with Hmong residents mandated policy changes, body cameras, and interpreters, addressing systemic discrimination and improving safeguards for minority communities. (The Guardian | 13 Jan 2026)

16. US Department of Homeland Security and ICE expanded ICE workforce and enforcement reach amid rhetoric of protection from consequences. ICE's expansion, coupled with leadership rhetoric suggesting agents would be shielded from accountability, deepened fears that immigration enforcement was evolving into a politicized domestic security force. (The 50501 Movement | 13 Jan 2026)

17. US Department of Justice declined a civil-rights investigation into an ICE shooting in Minneapolis. DOJ's decision that there was "no basis" for a civil-rights probe into an ICE shooting, despite ongoing FBI inquiries, signaled a narrowing of federal willingness to examine potential abuses by its own agents. (The 50501 Movement | 14 Jan 2026)

18. FBI and Department of Justice raided the home of Washington Post reporter Hannah Natanson and seized devices. The FBI's search of a reporter's home in a leak investigation, despite claims she was not a target, raised alarms about chilling effects on sources and press freedom in national security reporting. (The Guardian; Meidas Plus; Letters from an American (Heather Cox Richardson) | 14 Jan 2026; 16 Jan 2026)

19. US Department of Justice investigated Senator Elissa Slotkin over a video urging refusal of illegal orders. The federal investigation into Slotkin's participation in a video about disobeying unlawful orders used prosecutorial

tools against speech on constitutional military obligations, potentially chilling legislative dissent. (The Guardian | 14 Jan 2026)

20. US Department of Justice investigated three House Democrats over a video on military duty and illegal orders. Probes of Reps. Crow, Goodlander, and Houlahan for a video affirming troops' duty to refuse illegal orders suggested DOJ was being used to intimidate lawmakers who question executive military decisions. (The Guardian | 15 Jan 2026)

21. ICE and DHS agents used tear gas, flash-bangs, and arrests against protesters in Minneapolis. Federal agents' deployment of chemical munitions and flash-bangs on largely peaceful protesters in Minneapolis escalated crowd control into militarized suppression of dissent. (The Guardian; Meidas Plus; Democracy Outloud (Karen Zeigler); Letters from an American (Heather Cox Richardson) | 11 Jan 2026; 14 Jan 2026; 15 Jan 2026; 16 Jan 2026)

22. ICE shot and killed Renee Nicole Good during an immigration enforcement operation. The fatal shooting of US citizen Renee Good by an ICE agent during a large-scale operation became a flashpoint over lethal force, labeling of dissenters as terrorists, and accountability for federal officers. (Letters from an American (Heather Cox Richardson); The 50501 Movement; Popular Information (Judd Legum) | 10 Jan 2026; 11 Jan 2026; 12 Jan 2026)

23. ICE and DHS detained and rapidly deported or transferred over 2,400 people in Minnesota, including some with legal status. Mass arrests and swift removals during the Minnesota surge, affecting even visa holders and refugees, raised serious due-process and family-separation concerns. (The Guardian | 16 Jan 2026)

24. ICE detention staff at Camp East Montana were implicated in the asphyxia death of detainee Geraldo Lunas Campos. A medical examiner's finding of asphyxia in an ICE detainee's death, potentially a homicide, spotlighted allegations of lethal abuse and conflicting official narratives about what occurred in custody. (The Guardian | 16 Jan 2026)

25. US Department of Homeland Security and ICE were accused in an ACLU class-action of racial profiling and unlawful arrests in Minnesota. The ACLU's class-action suit alleging ICE targeted Somali and Latino communities through race-based stops and arrests challenged the legality of federal operations reshaping civic life in Minnesota. (The Guardian | 15 Jan 2026; 16 Jan 2026)

26. American Civil Liberties Union of Minnesota filed a class-action lawsuit over immigration agents' constitutional violations. The ACLU's suit on behalf of community members alleged that immigration agents violated

constitutional rights during Minnesota raids, using litigation to defend residents against federal overreach. (The Guardian | 15 Jan 2026)

27. US Department of Justice sought sensitive voter data from states under the guise of roll accuracy. DOJ's push for detailed voter information from dozens of states, later rebuffed in California, raised fears of voter intimidation and data misuse under the banner of election integrity. (The Guardian | 15 Jan 2026)

28. North Carolina Board of Elections eliminated campus polling sites and Sunday voting in some counties. The partisan North Carolina board's removal of college polling places and Sunday voting disproportionately burdened young, Black, and poor voters, functioning as targeted voter suppression. (Democracy Outloud (Karen Zeigler) | 15 Jan 2026)

29. The Trump Administration indefinitely suspended visa processing for 75 countries including Brazil. The broad suspension of visas for residents of 75 countries, justified by welfare concerns, sharply restricted mobility and signaled a sweeping, status-based barrier to entry into the US. (Meidas Plus | 14 Jan 2026)

30. US Department of Homeland Security and ICE were sued by Minnesota and the ACLU for racial profiling and unconstitutional enforcement. Parallel suits by Minnesota and civil-rights groups alleged that DHS's Minnesota operation relied on racial profiling and unlawful arrests, testing judicial willingness to curb federal enforcement excesses. (The 5050I Movement; The Guardian | 16 Jan 2026)

31. US Department of Homeland Security appealed an injunction protecting journalists at protests. DHS's appeal of protections for journalists at protests sought to restore broader authority to disperse or detain reporters, potentially chilling coverage of demonstrations. (The Guardian | 12 Jan 2026)

32. US Department of Labor and union critics were accused of echoing Nazi-style rhetoric in official messaging. Labor Department posts using slogans reminiscent of Nazi propaganda alarmed unions, who warned that such rhetoric from a federal agency normalizes exclusionary nationalism and undermines worker solidarity. (The Guardian | 14 Jan 2026)

33. US Department of Labor and the White House used white supremacist-coded language in official social media posts. A White House post referencing "Which way, Greenland man?" and similar messaging drew criticism for echoing white supremacist literature, signaling tolerance of extremist cues in government communication. (The Guardian | 14 Jan 2026)

34. US Department of Labor and White House were criticized by union leaders for white supremacist-tinged rhetoric. Union leaders' condemnation of administration rhetoric as echoing Nazi slogans highlighted fears that offi-

cial language was being used to legitimize exclusionary, ethnonationalist politics. (The Guardian | 14 Jan 2026)

35. US Department of Homeland Security and ICE were the target of a proposed Abolish ICE Act in Congress. Rep. Shri Thanedar's planned Abolish ICE Act responded to deaths in custody and the Good shooting by seeking to dismantle the agency's current enforcement authority through legislation. (The Guardian | 16 Jan 2026)

36. US public showed plurality support for abolishing ICE in national polling. A poll finding 46% support for abolishing ICE reflected a major shift in public attitudes toward federal immigration enforcement and could reshape future policy debates. (Letters from an American (Heather Cox Richardson) | 14 Jan 2026)

37. Latino voters in focus groups expressed regret over supporting Trump due to immigration tactics and economy. Latino focus-group participants' disillusionment with Trump's immigration and economic policies suggested that aggressive enforcement may be eroding support among key constituencies. (Meidas Plus | 15 Jan 2026)

38. US Department of Homeland Security and ICE were the subject of a congressional field hearing in St. Paul on abuses in Minnesota. Democratic lawmakers' field hearing titled "Kidnapped and Disappeared" documented trauma from ICE's Minnesota surge and warned DHS to preserve records, signaling future accountability efforts. (The Guardian | 16 Jan 2026)

39. California legislature enacted laws allowing arrest of federal agents for certain abuses. New California laws authorizing arrests of federal agents for specified misconduct asserted state power to hold federal officers accountable for abuses on state soil. (The Guardian | 16 Jan 2026)

40. Illinois Governor and state officials created an accountability commission for federal immigration officers. Illinois's new commission to gather complaints and oversee federal immigration officers reflected state-level innovation in monitoring federal agents' impact on residents' rights. (The Guardian | 16 Jan 2026)

41. New York Attorney General launched a portal to collect evidence of federal agent misconduct. New York's evidence portal for federal abuses empowered residents to document misconduct, potentially supporting future civil or criminal actions against rights-violating agents. (The Guardian | 16 Jan 2026)

42. US Department of Homeland Security and ICE were sued in a class action for racial profiling and unlawful arrests in Minnesota. The class-action suit alleging ICE agents stopped people based on race and demanded papers

in Minnesota highlighted systemic profiling concerns in federal immigration enforcement. (The Guardian | 16 Jan 2026)

43. US Department of Justice declined to investigate the Renee Good killing as a civil-rights case despite public outcry. DOJ's refusal to open a civil-rights probe into Good's death, even as protests and resignations mounted, signaled institutional reluctance to confront potential abuses by federal law enforcement. (The 50501 Movement | 16 Jan 2026)

44. US Department of Homeland Security and ICE were the focus of an ACLU class-action alleging racial profiling and unlawful arrests. The ACLU's class-action complaint detailed how ICE allegedly targeted Somali and Latino residents in Minnesota, challenging the legality of enforcement practices reshaping civic life. (The Guardian | 16 Jan 2026)

45. US Department of Homeland Security and ICE were sued by Minnesota and civil-rights groups over Operation Metro Surge. Combined lawsuits by Minnesota and the ACLU against Operation Metro Surge framed the federal crackdown as a "federal invasion" violating constitutional protections and state sovereignty. (The 50501 Movement; The Guardian | 16 Jan 2026)

## Economic Structure

1. Drug Enforcement Administration permanently placed two nitazene-class opioids into Schedule I. DEA's scheduling of N-Pyrrolidino Metonitazene and N-Pyrrolidino Protonitazene as Schedule I tightened federal control over emerging synthetic opioids, affecting medical research and criminal penalties. (Federal Register | 12 Jan 2026)

2. Food and Drug Administration issued draft guidance on using Bayesian methods in clinical trials. FDA's draft guidance on Bayesian trial design could reshape how drug efficacy and safety are evaluated, influencing the speed and rigor of bringing new therapies to market. (Federal Register | 12 Jan 2026)

3. Peter Thiel donated \$3 million to oppose California's proposed billionaire tax initiative. Thiel's multimillion-dollar contribution against a one-time billionaire tax illustrated how concentrated wealth can shape state tax policy debates and constrain redistributive measures. (The Guardian | 12 Jan 2026)

4. Trump Organization sought to hire foreign workers at reduced wages after a federal rule change. The Trump Organization's move to hire foreign workers at lower wages, enabled by its own administration's labor rule change, highlighted how policy shifts can directly benefit connected employers at workers' expense. (Meidas Plus | 12 Jan 2026)

5. US Department of Labor Inspector General investigated top aides to

the Labor Secretary for misuse of official travel. Placing two senior Labor Department aides on leave over alleged misuse of official events for personal travel reflected internal checks on ethical conduct within an agency central to worker protections. (Meidas Plus | 12 Jan 2026)

6. Drug Enforcement Administration scheduled 4-fluoroamphetamine as a Schedule I controlled substance. DEA's decision to classify 4-FA as Schedule I imposed strict controls on its manufacture and use, aligning US drug policy with international obligations and affecting criminal enforcement. (Federal Register | 15 Jan 2026)

7. Environmental Protection Agency set new pesticide residue tolerances for permethrin and pyriofenone. EPA's updated tolerances for permethrin and pyriofenone residues on crops adjusted the balance between agricultural productivity and consumer safety in the food supply. (Federal Register | 14 Jan 2026)

8. Federal Communications Commission implemented spectrum allocation changes from WRC-15 and repealed obsolete safety rules. FCC's spectrum reallocations and repeal of outdated public safety rules modernized communications regulation, with implications for emergency services, broadcasters, and wireless providers. (Federal Register | 14 Jan 2026)

9. Central banks worldwide issued a joint statement supporting Jerome Powell and warning against political interference. Global central bankers' public backing of Powell underscored international concern that US political attacks on the Fed could destabilize monetary policy and financial markets. (Meidas Plus | 13 Jan 2026)

10. US Department of Justice threatened the Federal Reserve with criminal indictment over renovation spending. DOJ's threat of indictment over Fed building renovations, seen as leverage on interest-rate policy, blurred oversight with coercion and risked undermining central bank independence. (Noahpinion (Noah Smith) | 13 Jan 2026)

11. Andrea Lucas, EEOC Chair publicly encouraged white men to file workplace discrimination complaints. The EEOC chair's call for white men to bring discrimination claims signaled a shift in enforcement emphasis that could redirect limited civil-rights resources away from historically marginalized groups. (Popular Information (Judd Legum) | 13 Jan 2026)

12. Peter Thiel and California Governor Gavin Newsom mobilized against a California billionaire tax ballot initiative. Opposition from both a major tech donor and the governor to a one-time billionaire tax showed how elite economic and political actors can align to block redistributive fiscal reforms. (The Guardian | 12 Jan 2026; 13 Jan 2026)

13. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention sought public comment on multiple health data collection initiatives. CDC's proposed surveys on lead poisoning, cancer control, disease surveillance, traveler genomics, aviation and land illness, maritime reporting, poison centers, and breastfeeding practices aimed to strengthen evidence-based public health policy. (Federal Register | 13 Jan 2026; 15 Jan 2026)

14. Occupational Safety and Health Administration extended compliance deadlines for the updated Hazard Communication Standard. OSHA's four-month extension for hazard communication compliance gave employers more time to adapt labeling and training, balancing worker safety goals with industry implementation capacity. (Federal Register | 15 Jan 2026)

15. Transportation Security Administration proposed revisions to the TSA PreCheck application information collection. TSA's planned changes to PreCheck data collection and customer portals aimed to streamline traveler vetting while raising questions about data security and privacy in expedited screening programs. (Federal Register | 15 Jan 2026)

16. US Environmental Protection Agency granted SRC, Inc. access to confidential pesticide data under strict safeguards. EPA's contract allowing a private firm access to confidential pesticide data for regulatory work highlighted reliance on contractors in technical oversight and the need for strong confidentiality protections. (Federal Register | 15 Jan 2026)

17. General Services Administration proposed revisions to Federal Audit Clearinghouse data collection. GSA's plan to add structured fields and fraud indicators to the Federal Audit Clearinghouse sought to improve federal oversight of grant spending without increasing reporting burdens. (Federal Register | 15 Jan 2026)

18. Transportation Security Administration announced revisions to TSA PreCheck information collection and ID system. The introduction of a MyTSA PreCheck ID and customer portal aimed to modernize traveler identity management, with implications for convenience and centralized personal data handling. (Federal Register | 15 Jan 2026)

19. CNN and polling organizations reported widespread public disapproval of Trump's economic performance. Polling showing most Americans view Trump's first year as an economic failure reflected public judgment on policies affecting cost of living and could influence future economic decision-making and elections. (Meidas Plus | 15 Jan 2026)

20. The Trump Administration implemented high tariffs that coincided with declining manufacturing employment. Reports that manufacturing jobs fell despite Trump's tariffs undercut claims that protectionist trade policy was

reviving industry, raising questions about who benefits from tariff-driven strategies. (Meidas Plus | 15 Jan 2026)

21. US government sold Venezuelan crude oil to a firm linked to a major Trump donor. The first US sale of Venezuelan oil to Vitol, whose executive heavily funded Trump-aligned PACs, blurred lines between foreign asset management and donor enrichment in energy policy. (Meidas Plus; Letters from an American (Heather Cox Richardson) | 14 Jan 2026; 15 Jan 2026; 16 Jan 2026)

22. Trump Organization entered multi-billion-dollar development deals with Saudi-backed Dar Global. Trump's \$7 billion Diriyah and \$3 billion Jeddah projects, funded by Saudi state entities, deepened financial ties between the president's business and a foreign government with major security interests. (Popular Information (Judd Legum) | 14 Jan 2026)

23. Food and Drug Administration sought OMB approval for tobacco product warning plan submissions. FDA's request to collect tobacco warning plans supported enforcement of statutory health warnings, shaping how risks are communicated to consumers and constraining industry marketing. (Federal Register | 16 Jan 2026)

24. Drug Enforcement Administration received an application from Siegfried USA to bulk-manufacture controlled substances. DEA's notice of Siegfried USA's application to manufacture multiple controlled substances highlighted regulatory scrutiny over pharmaceutical supply chains and potential diversion risks. (Federal Register | 16 Jan 2026)

25. Environmental Protection Agency issued multiple environmental regulatory notices and settlements. EPA's environmental impact statement notices, CERCLA settlement, land-ban exemption, Brownfields reporting changes, and related actions showed ongoing use of regulatory tools to manage pollution and cleanup costs. (Federal Register | 16 Jan 2026)

26. Federal Communications Commission updated the FM allotments table to reflect licensed stations. FCC's editorial update to remove vacant FM allotments aligned regulatory records with actual licenses, supporting accurate management of broadcast spectrum. (Federal Register | 16 Jan 2026)

27. China and Canada finalized a \$1 trillion strategic trade partnership. The China-Canada trade pact, including tariff cuts on EVs and agriculture, signaled shifting global trade alignments that could marginalize US economic influence amid its own tariff disputes. (Meidas Plus | 16 Jan 2026)

28. People's Republic of China restricted technology transfers needed for India's battery industry. China's export controls blocking battery tech transfers to India used industrial policy as a geopolitical tool, constraining a rival's development in a strategic sector. (Noahpinion (Noah Smith) | 14 Jan 2026)

29. Islamic Republic of Iran faced severe water and economic crises exacerbated by sanctions. Iran's collapsing aquifers, rationing, and high inflation, worsened by sanctions, fueled domestic unrest and illustrated how economic pressure can destabilize regimes and societies. (Noahpinion (Noah Smith) | 14 Jan 2026)

30. Russian Federation experienced understated inflation and shrinking real GDP amid war. Evidence that Russia overstated growth while real incomes fell suggested war-related economic strain and data manipulation, affecting its capacity to sustain military operations. (Noahpinion (Noah Smith) | 14 Jan 2026)

31. US Department of Agriculture and HHS released dietary guidelines emphasizing red meat and full-fat dairy. New federal dietary guidelines favoring red meat and saturated fats, despite cost-of-living pressures, raised questions about alignment with nutrition science and industry influence on public health advice. (The Guardian | 15 Jan 2026)

32. US Department of Health and Human Services changed flu vaccine recommendations for children to shared decision-making. HHS's shift to a softer flu vaccine recommendation for children during a severe season risked lowering uptake, with economic and health consequences from preventable illness. (The Guardian | 16 Jan 2026)

33. US Department of Health and Human Services under RFK Jr. appointed vaccine skeptics to the CDC's immunization advisory committee. Installing vaccine skeptics on the CDC's key immunization panel threatened to politicize scientific guidance, potentially undermining confidence in vaccination programs and public health. (The Guardian | 14 Jan 2026)

34. US Department of Health and Human Services failed to extend ACA subsidies, risking coverage losses. The administration's refusal to continue ACA subsidies jeopardized affordable coverage for many, using federal health policy levers in ways that could widen economic and health inequality. (Meidas Plus | 16 Jan 2026)

## **Information, Memory, and Manipulation**

1. President Donald Trump endorsed a baseless claim that Renee Good was part of a paid leftwing agitator network. Trump's amplification of unfounded allegations that Good was a paid agitator cast genuine protest as orchestrated subversion, undermining public trust in grassroots dissent. (The Guardian | 10 Jan 2026)

2. UK government and Ofcom considered banning X over AI-generated sexualized images and accelerated investigations. UK deliberations on

blocking X for AI-generated abuse highlighted tensions between platform regulation, child protection, and free expression in the digital public sphere. (The Guardian | 10 Jan 2026)

3. Immigration and Customs Enforcement resisted disclosing updated use-of-force policies, heavily redacting FOIA releases. ICE's refusal to meaningfully disclose its use-of-force rules, even under FOIA, limited public understanding of when agents may use lethal force and impeded informed oversight. (The Guardian | 10 Jan 2026)

4. The Trump Administration openly flouted the Epstein Transparency Act's disclosure requirements. Reports that the administration ignored the Epstein transparency law reflected a broader pattern of resisting statutory disclosure obligations in cases involving powerful figures. (Letters from an American (Heather Cox Richardson) | 10 Jan 2026)

5. Pentagon and Department of Defense imposed restrictive conditions that led mainstream reporters to resign from the Pentagon press corps. New Pentagon rules limiting reporting to official information drove traditional journalists out and opened space for partisan influencers, weakening independent scrutiny of military affairs. (The Guardian | 11 Jan 2026)

6. Vice President J.D. Vance and Department of Homeland Security released and amplified a selectively framed video of Renee Good's shooting. The administration's release of a short video portraying the ICE shooter as a victim, first leaked to a partisan outlet, exemplified selective evidence use to shape public perception of state violence. (Letters from an American (Heather Cox Richardson); Popular Information (Judd Legum) | 11 Jan 2026; 12 Jan 2026)

7. Federal government officials selectively leaked evidence in the Good case to partisan media outlets. Leaking a 47-second shooting video to a right-wing outlet before official release allowed the government to seed a favorable narrative, undermining neutral information dissemination about a contested killing. (Popular Information (Judd Legum) | 12 Jan 2026)

8. President Donald Trump and Vice President J.D. Vance conducted a smear campaign falsely labeling Renee Good a terrorist who tried to run over an agent. Top officials' false claims that Good attempted vehicular assault and was a domestic terrorist, contrary to video evidence, weaponized disinformation to justify lethal force and delegitimize protest. (Popular Information (Judd Legum) | 12 Jan 2026)

9. US Department of Justice and FBI altered and controlled access to the Good shooting crime scene and body-cam evidence. Reports that agents left and potentially altered the Good shooting scene and withheld body-cam

footage raised doubts about evidence integrity and transparency in a politically sensitive case. (Popular Information (Judd Legum) | 12 Jan 2026)

10. US Department of Justice released less than 1% of Epstein files despite a statutory deadline. DOJ's minimal release of Epstein records, in defiance of a clear legal deadline, kept potentially explosive information about elite networks largely hidden from public view. (Letters from an American (Heather Cox Richardson) | 16 Jan 2026)

11. US Department of Defense announced it would assume editorial control over Stars and Stripes. The Pentagon's move to control Stars and Stripes' content and remove independent editorial safeguards threatened the paper's role as an autonomous watchdog for service members. (Meidas Plus; The Guardian | 14 Jan 2026; 16 Jan 2026)

12. US Department of Labor and White House used rhetoric and imagery echoing white supremacist literature in official posts. Government social media posts echoing Nazi-style slogans and referencing white supremacist texts normalized extremist codes in official messaging, shaping identity politics in the public sphere. (The Guardian | 14 Jan 2026)

13. White House Press Secretary Karoline Leavitt attacked a reporter as a "leftwing activist" during a briefing on ICE actions. Leavitt's public denunciation of a reporter questioning ICE's defense as a partisan activist exemplified efforts to delegitimize critical journalism and frame scrutiny as ideological bias. (The Guardian | 15 Jan 2026)

14. CBS News and anonymous US officials faced internal dissent over a report seen as echoing administration leaks on an ICE shooting. CBS staff concerns that a report on an ICE officer's condition relied on politicized leaks highlighted newsroom struggles to avoid amplifying government spin in contentious cases. (Meidas Plus | 15 Jan 2026)

15. US Department of Justice and FBI raided a Washington Post reporter's home in a leak investigation. The search of Hannah Natanson's home and seizure of devices, targeting a journalist with many federal sources, risked deterring whistleblowers and constraining investigative reporting on government conduct. (The Guardian; Meidas Plus; Letters from an American (Heather Cox Richardson) | 14 Jan 2026; 16 Jan 2026)

16. US Department of Justice appealed a court order protecting journalists from dispersal at protests. DHS's appeal of an injunction shielding journalists at protests sought to restore broader authority to move or detain reporters, potentially limiting independent coverage of demonstrations. (The Guardian | 12 Jan 2026)

17. US Department of Justice sued states to obtain sensitive voter data

under voting laws. DOJ's lawsuits for detailed voter records, later rebuffed in California, raised fears that centralized data could be used to challenge or intimidate voters under the guise of roll maintenance. (The Guardian | 15 Jan 2026)

18. US Department of Labor was accused by unions of echoing Nazi rhetoric in official communications. Union leaders' criticism that Labor Department messaging mirrored Nazi slogans highlighted how official language choices can signal ideological alignment and influence public narratives about nation and work. (The Guardian | 14 Jan 2026)

19. President Donald Trump claimed credit for halting Iranian executions based on a Fox News report. Trump's unsubstantiated claim that he stopped Iranian executions, despite ongoing regime violence, exemplified self-serving misinformation about foreign events to bolster his image. (Meidas Plus | 15 Jan 2026)

20. The Trump Administration and internal GOP pollsters reviewed polling showing declining support for immigration policies. Internal polling that showed erosion of support for Trump's immigration agenda among key voter blocs informed discussions about messaging, illustrating how opinion data shapes political narratives. (Meidas Plus | 15 Jan 2026)

21. US National Archives and Records Administration invited public comment on proposed federal records disposition schedules. NARA's notice on records schedules allowed public input on which federal records are preserved or destroyed, affecting long-term transparency and historical accountability. (Federal Register | 15 Jan 2026)

22. US Department of Health and Human Services under RFK Jr. changed flu vaccine guidance in ways likely to reduce uptake despite severe season. Shifting flu vaccine recommendations to "shared decision-making" amid a bad season risked confusing the public and undermining trust in evidence-based health messaging. (The Guardian | 16 Jan 2026)

23. National Science Foundation launched the Tech Labs initiative to fund large, long-term research teams. NSF's Tech Labs program promised more stable, large-scale funding for scientific teams outside traditional academia, potentially reshaping the institutional landscape of knowledge production. (Noahpinion (Noah Smith) | 14 Jan 2026)

24. US Department of Labor and White House used white supremacist-coded language in official communications about Greenland. A White House cartoon referencing "Which way, Greenland man?" echoed extremist literature, signaling to far-right audiences and raising concerns about normalization of such codes in state messaging. (The Guardian | 14 Jan 2026)

25. US Department of Defense announced plans to take editorial control of Stars and Stripes. DoD's plan to direct Stars and Stripes' editorial content threatened the paper's independence and could limit critical reporting available to service members about their own institution. (Meidas Plus; The Guardian | 14 Jan 2026; 16 Jan 2026)



## ARCHIVAL CLOSURE NOTE

This volume concludes the contemporaneous event log for the period it documents. The Democracy Clock Event Log records governance actions affecting democratic institutions in the United States during a defined historical window beginning January 20, 2025, the constitutional transition date, and ending January 16, 2026, marking the final complete weekly record of the first year of coverage.

The archive is organized into fifty-two distinct weekly units, each representing a discrete historical interval, recorded in full before the next begins. With the completion of this volume, that archival sequence is finished by design.

No effort is made here to summarize the period, evaluate its overall direction, or draw conclusions from the record as a whole. Such synthesis requires interpretive judgment beyond the scope of an archival log. The purpose of this volume is narrower and more exacting: to preserve a verified, contemporaneous factual record of events as they entered the public record, without retrospective compression, narrative smoothing, or selective emphasis.

Events occurring after the final covered date are not part of this archive and are not included. Actions or effects extending beyond the archive's temporal boundary are recorded only insofar as they could be observed and verified within the designated period. This preserves consistency of method and integrity of time.

The evidentiary record presented here stands complete. No entries have been withheld for narrative balance. No conclusions have been added for

effect or symmetry. The archive remains exactly as it was assembled, week by week, as events unfolded.

This volume stands as a closed primary record, suitable for citation, reference, and long-term study. Interpretation, assessment, and analytical judgment are addressed in companion volumes within *The Democracy Clock* project, which assume the existence of this archive and build upon it.

The archive is now closed.

What follows is part of history.