



Rep. Tom Emmer on THE SQUAWK BOX – 2025

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HOST:

Majority Whip Congressman Tom Emmer joins us now from Miami. Good morning to you. I want to talk about crypto, all the EO's that have been going on, but I do want to talk about what just took place over the weekend on two fronts, both the Hegseth confirmation, which was so, so very close, and then also this back and forth with Colombia on the illegal immigrants being sent back and what turned out to be a potential debate over tariffs and whether you think this is just the beginning of what we're going to be seeing in terms of debates with other countries.

REP. TOM EMMER:

Well, good morning and happy new year. Great to be with you for the first time this year. First, when you talk about Colombia and the little back and forth that we had over the last day or two, it actually proves Donald Trump's point. I mean, initially they said we're not taking these illegals back, which the question is why, what's wrong with them? And then Donald Trump did what Donald Trump does, the master negotiator. They have now agreed to not only take back the illegals, but to come up with their own transportation and deliver them back. And to your question, I don't think it's going to be like this every time. I think it only takes a couple of times for people to be reminded that Donald Trump is a very serious leader. And if you're going to work with the United States, you're going to have to work with the United States under his terms.

HOST:

Talk about his terms. One big question that's emerged even over the last, call it 72 hours, has been this issue of firing some of these inspector generals. And there's no question he has the very right, Congressman Emmer, to do that. The question is, legally, there's this 30-day period with which he is supposed to provide according to the law, and whether someone like you agrees with this approach of effectively bypassing that.

REP. TOM EMMER:

Well, I'm not going to say the executive doesn't have the authority. I'll let the courts decide that. Clearly, you started off by acknowledging that these are executive agency positions. Who's in charge of executive agencies? The executive. These attorneys general served at the discretion of the president. This president has come in and said, you are no longer going to be employed by this administration. Yeah, there's some pushback, but Congress's job is oversight. That's what it is. It's oversight and budgetary. And frankly, Congress has to get back to doing its job. The president clearly is doing his.

HOST:

But what about this 30-day period? So that's what I'm saying. It may very well be that he has the absolute right to do it. The question is, he's supposed to, according to the law, provide a 30-day sort of notification period. And if you don't do that, and you're not following the law, what does someone like you think of that?



REP. TOM EMMER:

Well, I'm going to tell you one. I haven't read the law, so I'm not going to, like I said, I'll let the courts tell us how they interpret whatever it is that they're relying on. But I'm going to say this to you. It's not going to change a thing. This is this is a bunch of do about nothing. The president of the United States has the complete and absolute right to determine whether these people are going to stay on with the administration or not, regardless of these details that you're talking about. 30 days here. It won't change a thing. So President Trump exercised his authority, and I respect that.

HOST:

Talking about his authority. I do want to also talk about TikTok for half a moment, if you'd indulge me, which is clearly Congress on a bipartisan basis decided that TikTok was a national security threat. The Supreme Court upheld the law. And it appears that there's now a real debate about what's happening, which is to say that the president has said that he's trying to figure out a way to sell it and thinks that he has this 90 day or 75 day period. By the way, Apple and Google clearly don't agree insofar as they've decided that they're not going to be hosting this app on their platform because they look at the law and folks like Tom Cotton who say we have a law. It's in place. You can't do this.

REP. TOM EMMER:

Well, for me, I respect my colleagues who had the top secret briefings and came out. It was the House Energy and Commerce Committee, which has two ends of the political spectrum amongst their 54 members. I mean, it goes all the way from the far left to the strident right. They came out after a after a top secret briefing and voted 54 to zero for the law that we're talking about. So I side with that. I believe that the Communist Party of China should not be allowed to collect data. We wouldn't have sold the New York Times to the Germans, right? It's the same thing when our adversary is collecting all of this data, detailed data on American citizens. Now, on the other side of that, when you talk about President Trump, if there's anyone that can get this done, if there's anyone that can convince the Chinese to get out of this and allow the platform to continue as a free and open platform, not as a surveillance device, it's Donald J. Trump. He's going to do whatever he can to make sure that happens.

HOST:

The question that I would ask you, though, is what should American companies that currently would otherwise be hosting this service do? Meaning the president said, go ahead. I'm granting you the option to effectively continue to host this. Not even the option. He's saying, go do it. And companies like Oracle and Akamai are doing that on the assumption that the president is somehow going to protect them. Meantime, Apple and Google are not, because they're saying the law is the law of the land. What do you say?

REP. TOM EMMER:

Yeah, I think Apple and Google are sending a message to the Chinese Communist Party, which is, look, we believe that you're going to be out of business in the United States with Donald J. Trump in the White House, and we're going to choose not to play either side of this. We're just going to stick with the law the way it is and send you a strong message that if TikTok is going to survive as an open and free platform in this country, it's going to be without the surveillance side of it from the Chinese Communist Party. Others that choose to run it based on the idea that you've got a 60, 75, 90 day window, that's entirely their business decision. So I don't see this as a conflict. I think it's more the business, the market is sending a message to the Chinese Communist Party.



HOST:

I don't know if you've followed it, but over the weekend and really even starting last week, there's been a whole new emergence around AI, this thing called DeepSeek, which comes out of China. It's now the number one free app on Apple, potentially upending the entire world of AI, open AI, Anthropic, all the big tech companies that have invested in it because they've managed to do this in an open source way that's much more efficient. You may not need as many chips to do it. You may not need as much energy to do it. But given the advantage it appeared that the United States had in AI, which was supposed to be our big economic advantage literally a week ago and where we are today, so many questions have emerged. What do you think of that?

REP. TOM EMMER:

Well, it is so many questions that have emerged. I have a lot of questions. I believe we are still ahead of the Chinese. I know what you're talking about. I don't know the details. We're going to have to get down into the minutia to understand exactly what we weren't talking about two weeks ago. And that'll happen, no doubt, at the retreat that we have over the next three days with the Republican conference, but also when we get back to Washington next Tuesday. And I think everybody recognizes how significant this is. It's having impact on the markets as we speak. But like much with AI and blockchain and all this new world that we're in, this is the greatest sci-fi story that we read 30, 40 years ago. So every day, people tend to be afraid of what they don't understand. I think at the end of the day, it's going to turn out very well for the United States of America.

HOST:

Congressman Emmer, I could talk to you forever. I know we got to go. But I do. I do want to talk about this retreat real quick, reconciliation, taxes, whether you think your party is going to stay together as it relates to taxes in terms of bringing in income at a time when people are trying to deal with the deficit. I know you're excited about the EO on crypto and things like that. What biggest thing do you think is going to come out of this meeting?

REP. TOM EMMER:

Well, I think it's a we're already unified. The Republican conference, regardless of what people on the outside of our conference want to say, based on statements from our members, et cetera, we are incredibly unified. I mean, there's 219 soon to be maybe 217 already of us. And frankly, when you've got that small a group, you have to understand each other. You don't have to agree. You don't have to like one another. But when you are together, we've got a job to do. And I think what this next couple of days, President Trump will speak tonight. Vice President J.D. Vance is going to speak at some point. But the discussion amongst the conference is going to be how do we enact this aggressive timeline that our speaker, Mike Johnson, has set in place? The first step would be to vote on a budget resolution in the first week of February. That is what unlocks the ability to do all the other stuff with the reconciliation bill. And yes, we're going to have disagreements about what happens when you make Trump tax cuts permanent, when you extend the TCGA that was signed into law in December of 17. But the whole thing is, again, I think this is not as the whip is a member. It's much ado about nothing. We are continuing current policy going forward. And that shouldn't be a cost.

HOST:

Congressman, I want to thank you for joining us. I hope we have an opportunity to continue this discussion as things progress and hopefully get to talk to you on the other side of this meeting. Thanks.



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