

# TODAY'S TRENDS ON CAPITOL HILL

FEBRUARY 9, 2026

THE GDELT PROJECT

## LEGISLATIVE GRIDLOCK & ESCALATING INQUIRIES: FEBRUARY 9, 2026 REPORT

### DAY-AT-A-GLANCE: FEBRUARY 9, 2026

**HOUSE ACTION & BIPARTISAN WINS**  
PASSED HOUSING FOR THE 21ST CENTURY ACT (H.R. 6644) (390-9); 250th ANNIVERSARY MEASURES PASSED

**DHS FUNDING CRISIS & SENATE DEMANDS**  
LOOMING FRIDAY DEADLINE; SENATE DEMOCRATS DEMAND STRICT ICE REFORMS (BODY CAMS, NO MASKS)

**EXECUTIVE BRANCH & INVESTIGATIONS**  
TRUMPX.GOV LAUNCHED; EPSTEIN-MAXWELL INQUIRY INTENSIFIES; NETFLIX-WARNER MERGER HEARING

**MAJOR DEVELOPMENTS**

**ANTITRUST & MEDIA CONSOLIDATION**  
SENATE SCRUTINIZES MERGER OVER LABOR MARKET CONSOLIDATION & 'WOKER' CONTENT BIAS. CEO SARANDOS DEFENDS COMPETITIVENESS

**THE TRUSR-RUJUBEL INVESTIGATION**  
GHISLAINE MAXWELL INVOKESES 5TH AMENDMENT; ALLEGATIONS OF DOJ COVER-UP & IMPROPER REDACTIONS; ELECPCHEDULED

**IMMIGRATION ENFORCEMENT & DHS FUNDING**  
DEMOCRATS ISOLATE DHS FUNDING, DEMAND ICE/CBP REFORMS, LOCAL OUTRAGE OVER SECRET POLICE TACTICS & 4TH AMENDMENT VIOLATIONS

**ECONOMIC POLICY & TREASURY OVERSIGHT**  
SECRETARY BESSERT DEFENDS TARIFFS; 'TRUMP ACCOUNTS' INITIATIVE FOR CHILD FINANCIAL LITERACY HIGHLIGHTED

**THE EPSTEIN-MAXWELL INVESTIGATION**  
GHISLAINE MAXWELL INVOKESES 5TH AMENDMENT; ALLEGATIONS OF DOJ COVER-UP & IMPROPER REDACTIONS; CLINTONS & WEXNER DEPOSITIONS SCHEDULED

**HEALTH & THE MAHA AGENDA**  
HHS SECRETARY RFK JR. PROMOTES 'REAL FOOD' GUIDELINES; TRUMPX.GOV CLAIMS MAJOR DRUG PRICE DROPS

**DEEP DIVE: TRENDS & THEMES**

**INSTITUTIONAL DISTRUST & NATIVISM**  
BREAKDOWN OF TRUST; POLITICS DEFINED BY NATIVISM & STRUGGLE OVER 'BELONGING'. APPROVAL RATINGS UNDERWATER AMID COST OF LIVING CONCERN

**FEDERALISM VS. EXECUTIVE OVERREACH**  
STATE RESISTANCE CRYSTALLIZES; GOVERNORS CHALLENGE FEDERAL CONTROL ON VACCINES, DEI, & GENDER CARE. STATES AS PRIMARY BATTLEGROUNDS

**THE WEAPONIZATION OF THE DOJ**  
DOJ VIEWED AS POLITICAL TOOL; ALLEGATIONS OF INSIDER TRADING & FAILURE TO COMPLY WITH EPSTEIN TRANSPARENCY ACT FUEL RETALIATORY INVESTIGATIONS

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**DHS FUNDING CRISIS**  
HIGH PROBABILITY OF TARGETED SHUTDOWN AFFECTING FEMA, TSA, COAST GUARD. PROTRACTED STALEMATE LIKELY IF NO CONCESSIONS

**ANTITRUST LITIGATION**  
NETFLIX-WARNER MERGER FACES BIPARTISAN OPPOSITION; POTENTIAL FOR LEGAL FIGHT & LEGISLATIVE EFFORTS TO INCLUDE 'CONTENT DIVERSITY'

**HOUSING EXPANSION**  
ROAD TO HOUSING ACT LIKELY SIGNIFICANT BIPARTISAN LEGISLATION; EXPANSION TO INCLUDE 'LAND BACK' & ENERGY CODE REIMBURSEMENTS (Framer Act)

**LEGISLATIVE ROUNDUP**

BILLS PASSED	BILLS DISCUSSED	HEARINGS & EVENTS
H.R. 6644 Housing S. 3705 Time Capsule H.R. 5616 250th Coins H.R. 1531 Protect Taiwan H.R. 3190 Burma Sanctions	No Funds for Forced Labor Act SAVE America Act	Antitrust Hearing, Treasury Testimony Maxwell Deposition Pressers VP Vances in Armenia Trump RX Launch

# TODAY'S TRENDS ON CAPITOL HILL

FEBRUARY 9, 2026

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LEGISLATIVE GRIDLOCK INTENSIFIES OVER DHS FUNDING AS HOUSE ADVANCES HOUSING AND ANNIVERSARY MEASURES AMID ESCALATING EPSTEIN-MAXWELL AND ANTITRUST INQUIRIES.

## DAY-AT-A-GLANCE

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February 9, 2026, was marked by significant legislative movement in the House, a high-stakes antitrust hearing regarding the **Netflix-Warner Bros. Discovery** merger, and a deepening confrontation between Congressional Democrats and the Trump administration over **immigration enforcement** and the **Epstein-Maxwell** files. The House successfully passed the **Housing for the 21st Century Act (H.R. 6644)** with overwhelming bipartisan support (390-9), alongside commemorative measures for the nation's 250th anniversary. However, a looming Friday deadline for **Department of Homeland Security (DHS)** funding remains unresolved, with Senate Democrats demanding strict reforms on ICE conduct, including body camera mandates and a ban on agents wearing masks during operations. ([Source](#), [Source](#), [Source](#))

In the executive branch, President Trump and Dr. Oz launched **TrumpRX.gov**, a government

website aimed at slashing prescription drug prices through "most favored nation" pricing deals and tariff-backed negotiations with pharmaceutical giants. Meanwhile, the investigation into Jeffrey Epstein's network reached a new fever pitch following a closed-door deposition where **Ghislaine Maxwell** invoked her Fifth Amendment rights. House Democrats alleged a cover-up regarding the redaction of prominent names in recently released DOJ files, while Republicans scheduled upcoming depositions for the Clintoins and other associates. ([Source](#), [Source](#), [Source](#))

## MAJOR DEVELOPMENTS

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### Antitrust and Media Consolidation

- The Senate Antitrust Subcommittee scrutinized the proposed **Netflix-Warner Bros. Discovery merger**. Chairman Mike Lee and Ranking Member Cory Booker raised concerns over vertical foreclosure and the consolidation of the creative labor market. ([Source](#))
- Netflix CEO Ted Sarandos testified that the merger would not lead to layoffs or higher prices, arguing that the entities would remain competitive and complementary. ([Source](#))
- Subcommittee members grilled Sarandos on "woke" content and political bias within Netflix, citing statistics that 41% of G-rated children's programming contains LGBTQ+ content. ([Source](#))

## Immigration Enforcement and DHS Funding

- Senate Democrats, led by Dick Durbin, successfully isolated DHS funding from the broader appropriations package to demand reforms to **ICE and CBP**. Durbin cited DHS data showing nearly 40% of ICE arrests in 2025 involved individuals with no criminal record. ([Source](#))
- House Minority Leader Hakeem Jeffries outlined ten demands for DHS funding, including a ban on "roving patrols," mandatory judicial warrants, and the removal of masks for federal agents. ([Source](#), [Source](#))
- Senator Jeff Merkley hosted a town hall highlighting local outrage over "secret police" tactics and 4th Amendment violations during federal immigration raids. ([Source](#))

## The Epstein-Maxwell Investigation

- Ghislaine Maxwell refused to answer questions in an Oversight Committee deposition, invoking her Fifth Amendment rights. Democrats claimed she is leveraging her silence to seek clemency from President Trump. ([Source](#), [Source](#))
- Congressman Jamie Raskin reported that a review of unredacted files revealed the names of prominent individuals, like Les Wexner, were improperly redacted, while the names of victims were accidentally exposed in public releases. ([Source](#), [Source](#))
- Chairman James Comer confirmed upcoming depositions for **Bill and Hillary Clinton** and former Victoria's Secret CEO Les Wexner. ([Source](#))

## Economic Policy and Treasury Oversight

- Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent testified on the 2025 FSOC report, emphasizing "Main Street's turn" for growth and a target to lower the national deficit to 3% of GDP by 2030. ([Source](#))
- Secretary Bessent defended Trump's tariffs as a tool for international leverage, despite being confronted with his own past writings stating that tariffs are inflationary. ([Source](#))
- The administration highlighted the "Trump Accounts" initiative, intended to provide every American child with \$1,000 in a low-cost index fund to promote financial literacy and equity. ([Source](#))

## Health and the MAHA Agenda

- HHS Secretary RFK Jr. marked one year in office by announcing new dietary guidelines focusing on "real food" and saturating fats, ending what he termed the "war on beef and whole milk." ([Source](#))
- The launch of **TrumpRX.gov** reportedly negotiated price drops for weight loss drugs (Wegovy/Ozempic) by up to 578% and insulin to \$25. ([Source](#))

## DEEP DIVE: TRENDS AND THEMES

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**Institutional Distrust and NATIVISM:** A pervasive theme of the day was the breakdown of trust in traditional institutions. Public opinion data presented by Cliff Young suggests that American politics is now defined by **Nativism**—a struggle over who truly "belongs" in the country. This is manifesting in the physical separation of cultural events, such as the competing Super Bowl halftime

shows, and the polarizing views on immigration enforcement. Approval ratings for President Trump remain underwater at 42%, with his lowest marks on the cost of living (30%), indicating that despite the "Trump Accounts" and drug pricing successes, everyday affordability remains the administration's greatest vulnerability. ([Source](#), [Source](#))

**Federalism vs. Executive Overreach:** State-level resistance is crystallizing. Governors from Washington, Colorado, and Nebraska used their State of the State addresses to either model or mock the federal government's approach. In Washington, Governor Bob Ferguson moved vaccine recommendations from federal control to the state level, citing a loss of scientific integrity at the CDC. Conversely, Nebraska Governor Jim Pillen celebrated state-level bans on gender-affirming care and DEI, positioning Nebraska as a "woke-free" laboratory. This highlights a trend where states are becoming the primary battlegrounds for constitutional rights and social policy. ([Source](#), [Source](#), [Source](#))

**The Weaponization of the DOJ:** The day's proceedings in the House Judiciary and Oversight committees suggest that the Department of Justice is increasingly viewed as a political tool. Allegations of "insider trading" by the President following private merger talks and the DOJ's perceived failure to comply with the **Epstein Transparency Act** have created a cycle of retaliatory investigations. The looming depositions of the Clintons indicate that Republicans intend to use these files to damage the "legacy" elite, while Democrats are focusing on the administration's ties to Epstein associates currently serving in the cabinet. ([Source](#), [Source](#), [Source](#))

## HYPOTHESES AND FUTURE LEGISLATIVE OUTLOOK

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**DHS Funding Crisis:** There is a high probability of a targeted **government shutdown** on Friday affecting FEMA, TSA, and the Coast Guard. Democrats appear willing to use these essential services as leverage to force a retreat on the administration's "Operation Midway Blitz." If the administration does not concede on the "no masks" and body camera requirements, expect a protracted stalemate that could damage Republican standing in the 2026 midterms. ([Source](#), [Source](#))

**Antitrust Litigation:** The Netflix-Warner Bros. Discovery merger is unlikely to proceed without a massive legal fight. Senate Republicans are signaling that they may oppose the deal on cultural/ideological grounds (content bias), while Democrats will oppose it on labor and consumer cost grounds. This could lead to a unique bipartisan effort to strengthen the **Sherman and Clayton Acts** to include "content diversity" as a pro-competitive factor. ([Source](#))

**Housing Expansion:** Following the 390-9 House vote, the **Road to Housing Act** is likely to become the most significant piece of bipartisan legislation signed this year. Legislative options will likely expand to include "Land Back" initiatives for tribal nations and federal reimbursements for states that roll back costly energy codes, as proposed in the **FRAMER Act**. ([Source](#), [Source](#))

## LEGISLATIVE ROUNDUP

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The House moved aggressively on housing and 250th-anniversary legislation, while the Senate remained focused on the DHS funding gap and executive nominations. State address-

es also teased significant new tax and education proposals.

## BILLS DISCUSSED/DEBATED:

- **H.R. 6644 - Housing for the 21st Century Act:** A comprehensive bipartisan bill to increase housing supply by streamlining environmental reviews, supporting community banks, and removing chassis requirements for manufactured homes. **Passed House 390-9.** ([Source](#), [Source](#))
- **S. 3705 - Semi-quincentennial Congressional Time Capsule Act:** Authorizes a time capsule to be buried at the Capitol, to be opened in 2276. **Passed House.** ([Source](#))
- **H.R. 5616 - \$2.50 for America's 250th Act:** Directs the minting of commemorative \$2.50 coins for the 250th anniversary. **Passed House.** ([Source](#))
- **H.R. 1531 - Protect Taiwan Act:** Directs financial regulators to exclude PRC representatives from international banking orgs upon threats to Taiwan. **Passed House 395-2.** ([Source](#))
- **H.R. 3190 - Brave Burma Act:** Imposes sanctions on Burmese military junta oil, gas, and jet fuel sectors. **Passed House.** ([Source](#))
- **No Funds for Forced Labor Act:** Bipartisan bill to prevent international financial institutions from funding projects involving forced Uighur labor. ([Source](#))
- **SAVE America Act:** Proposed legislation requiring proof of citizenship and photo ID for federal elections. ([Source](#))

## HEARINGS & PRESS EVENTS:

- **Antitrust Hearing on Netflix Merger:** Senate subcommittee examined the vertical and horizontal impacts of the Netflix-Warner merger. ([Source](#))
- **Treasury Secretary Bessent Testimony:** House Financial Services Committee hearing on financial stability, tariffs, and inflation. ([Source](#))
- **Ghislaine Maxwell Deposition Pressers:** Both parties reacted to Maxwell pleading the 5th; Democrats alleged DOJ redaction failures. ([Source](#), [Source](#), [Source](#))
- **Religious Liberty Commission:** Heard testimony on antisemitism at Harvard/UCLA and "debunking" of religious groups. ([Source](#), [Source](#))
- **VP Vances in Armenia:** Press conference announcing 1-2-3 nuclear agreement and drone/chip sales to Armenia. ([Source](#))
- **Trump RX Launch:** Press event with Dr. Oz and RFK Jr. detailing drug price slashes. ([Source](#))

## ABOUT THIS REPORT

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**Today's Trends On Capitol Hill** is a public interest experiment in applying deep trend analysis to the daily business of the United States Congress to explore how responsibly applied advanced AI can help journalists, scholars and Congressional staff better understand the overarching legislative trends, themes and patterns of Congress.

**No data is used to train or tune any AI model.**

Each morning, we apply Google's Gemini 3 to deeply examine yesterday's Congressional activity to tease out its overarching themes and trends into a richly annotated thematic analy-

sis. Each high-level insight is connected back to the original source material, allowing journalists and scholars to understand the legislative themes and trends and instantly click out to the underlying sources for details.

This inaugural report is based on deep analysis of CSPAN, CSPAN2 and CSPAN3 coverage in collaboration with the Internet Archive's TV News Archive. It is currently limited to the Congressional business covered on those three CSPAN channels and thus may not include all major Congressional business, may include activity from previous days that aired on a later date, and/or may include other ma-

jor federal, state and local governmental business. We will continue to refine this report to incorporate a growing array of Congressional information sources. This report is entirely machine generated using Gemini 3 and may include errors and omissions. Please verify all findings. No data is used to train or tune any AI model.

For questions or suggestions, please contact [kalev.leetaru5@gmail.com](mailto:kalev.leetaru5@gmail.com). You can also learn more about the GDELT Project at <https://blog.gdeltproject.org/> and the Internet Archive's TV News Archive at <https://archive.org/details/tv>.