

TODAYS TRENDS ON CAPITOL HILL

FEBRUARY 11, 2026

THE GDELT PROJECT

CONSTITUTIONAL CONFRONTATIONS, DHS SHUTDOWN, & EPSTEIN RECKONING: A DAY OF HIGH-STAKES CONVERGENCE | FEBRUARY 11, 2026

EPSTEIN RECKONING & DOJ OVERSIGHT

- AG PAM BONDI: Redactions Exposed Victims, Shielded Perpetrators? Six Powerful Men Hidden (Khanna & Massie)
- LESLIE WEXNER: Billionaire Co-Conspirator (FBI Labeled)
- RESIGNATION CALLS: COMMERCE SECRETARY HOWARD LUTNICK: 2012 Epstein Island Visit Confirmed (Contradicting 2005 Claim)
- VIRGINIA'S LAW (Introduced): Eliminate Statute of Limitations for Adult Sex Trafficking Claims

DHS SHUTDOWN IMPASSE & ICE OPERATIONS

- MIDNIGHT FRIDAY (FEB 13) 00:00:00
- FUNDING LAPSE THREAT: Coast Guard, TSA, FEMA (Non-Immigration Agencies)
- ACTING DIRECTOR LYONS: 8,000% Threat Increase Justifies Masks; No Disciplinary Data (Minnesota Shootings)
- ICE: SENATE DEMOCRATS DEMANDS: Body Cameras, Warrants, Unmasking Agents
- REPUBLICAN LEADERS ARGUMENT: ICE Funded via Reconciliation; Shutdown Hurts Secret Service
- FUTURE OUTLOOK: Partial Shutdown Highly Likely. Speaker & Leader at Impasse.

ELECTION INTEGRITY & SAVE AMERICA ACT

- S. 1383 PASSED HOUSE (223-206)
- GOP VIEW: Mandate Proof of Citizenship & Photo ID for Federal Elections
- DEMOCRAT VIEW: "Modern-Day Poll Tax." "Jim Crow 2.0" (Disenfranchise 21M Citizens)
- JUDICIAL REVIEW: GOP Betting on Favorable Supreme Court Ruling on Tariff Authority (IEEA)

CONSTITUTIONAL FRICITION & WEAPONIZATION

- GRAND JURY REFUSES INDICTMENT: Senators Kelly & Slotkin (Military Orders Video)
- KELLY & SLOTKIN: "Authoritarian Playbook" to Silence Dissent via Speech or Debate Clause
- WEAPONIZATION vs. ACCOUNTABILITY (Mirrored Theme)
- REPUBLICANS: ARCTIC FROST (Jack Smith Investigation)
- DEMOCRATS: "Vendetta Factory" at DOJ (Targeting Kelly, Slotkin, James)
- TRENDS & THEMES: Epstein Class Polarization, Federalism Under Strain, Weaponization Narrative.

LEGISLATIVE ROUNDUP & FUTURE OUTLOOK

- SAVE America Act (S. 1383): Passed House (Election Federalization Debates).
- Virginia's Law: Introduced (Child Safety & Accountability).
- Law Enforcement Innovate to De-escalate Act (H.R. 2189): Debated (TASER Reclassification).
- Securing America's Critical Minerals Supply Act (H.R. 3617): Debated (Supply Chain Vulnerabilities).

Overall, a Day Defined by Converging Crises & Intense Political Polarization with Significant Future Implications.

TODAY'S TRENDS ON CAPITOL HILL

FEBRUARY 11, 2026

CONGRESSIONAL BRIEFING: CONSTITUTIONAL CONFRONTATIONS, IMPENDING DHS SHUTDOWN, AND THE EPSTEIN MORAL RECKONING

DAY-AT-A-GLANCE

February 11, 2026, was defined by a high-stakes convergence of constitutional crises, fiscal deadlines, and a massive moral reckoning regarding the Jeffrey Epstein files. Attorney General Pam Bondi faced a combative House Judiciary Committee hearing where she was accused of "botching" the release of 3 million pages of Epstein-related documents by outing victims while redacting the names of high-profile perpetrators. Simultaneously, the Department of Commerce Secretary, Howard Lutnick, faced calls for resignation after unsealed files contradicted his previous claims of cutting contact with Epstein after 2005. This fallout shadowed a day where the U.S. House passed the **SAVE America Act**, a controversial bill federalizing election standards by requiring proof of citizenship for registration and photo ID for voting.

The legislative agenda was further complicated by an impending funding lapse for the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) set for Friday, February 13. While Republicans and Democrats remain at an impasse over ICE en-

forcement protocols—specifically regarding the use of masks, body cameras, and warrants—the House successfully moved a rule to block the repeal of President Trump's tariff-related emergency declarations through July. Adding to the tension, Senators Mark Kelly and Elissa Slotkin held a press conference following a D.C. grand jury's refusal to indict them for their "military orders" video, which they characterized as a historic failure of the administration's attempts to weaponize the DOJ against the legislative branch.

MAJOR DEVELOPMENTS

The Epstein Files and DOJ Oversight

- Attorney General Pam Bondi testified that the DOJ released 3 million pages of Epstein files but faced bipartisan criticism for redaction errors that exposed victim identities while shielding alleged co-conspirators. ([Source](#), [Source](#))
- Representatives Ro Khanna and Thomas Massie reported finding six "powerful men" hidden in the files without legal justification, including billionaire Leslie Wexner, whom the FBI labeled a co-conspirator. ([Source](#), [Source](#))
- Commerce Secretary Howard Lutnick confirmed a 2012 visit to Epstein's island with his family, despite earlier claims of ending contact in 2005, leading to widespread calls for his resignation. ([Source](#), [Source](#))
- Senator Schumer and Representative Leger Fernandez introduced "**Virginia's Law**," named for Virginia Giuffre, to eliminate statutes of limitations for civil claims related to adult sex trafficking. ([Source](#), [Source](#))

DHS Funding Impasse and ICE Operations

- Funding for the Coast Guard, TSA, and FEMA is set to expire at midnight Friday as Senate Democrats demand ICE reforms (body cameras, judicial warrants, and unmasking agents) as a condition for support. ([Source](#), [Source](#), [Source](#))
- Acting ICE Director Todd Lyons defended the use of masks by agents due to an 8,000% increase in death threats but refused to provide data on officer disciplinaries following the fatal shootings of U.S. citizens in Minnesota. ([Source](#), [Source](#))
- Republican leaders argue that ICE is already funded through 2029 via reconciliation, meaning a shutdown would only hurt non-immigration agencies like the Secret Service and FEMA. ([Source](#))

Election Integrity and the SAVE America Act

- The House passed **S. 1383 (The SAVE America Act)** by a 223-206 vote, mandating proof of citizenship for federal registration and a government-issued photo ID to vote. ([Source](#), [Source](#))
- Democrats argued the bill constitutes a "modern-day poll tax" and "Jim Crow 2.0," claiming it will disenfranchise 21 million citizens who lack easy access to birth certificates or passports. ([Source](#), [Source](#))
- A provision in the act requires states to share full voter roll data with the DHS, sparking privacy and federalism concerns. ([Source](#), [Source](#))

Constitutional Friction: The Kelly/Slotkin Indictment Failure

- A federal grand jury declined to indict six Democratic lawmakers, including Senators Kelly and Slotkin, over a video advising military members to refuse "unlawful orders." ([Source](#), [Source](#))
- Kelly and Slotkin characterized the attempted indictment as an "authoritarian playbook" move by the administration to silence dissent via the Speech or Debate Clause. ([Source](#))

DEEP DIVE: TRENDS AND THEMES

Weaponization vs. Accountability: A recurring theme is the mirrored use of the term "weaponization." Republicans cite "Arctic Frost" (the Jack Smith investigation into Republican lawmakers' phone records) as the ultimate weaponization of government ([Source](#)). Conversely, Democrats point to the attempted indictments of Senators Kelly and Slotkin and the targeting of New York AG Letitia James as proof of a "vendetta factory" operating within the Bondi-led DOJ ([Source](#), [Source](#)).

Federalism under Strain: The administration is increasingly moving to "nationalize" functions historically left to states. This is evident in the **SAVE America Act**'s override of state election procedures ([Source](#)) and the DOJ's "shakedown" of Minnesota, where federal agents remained in cities pending the turnover of state voter rolls ([Source](#), [Source](#)).

The "Epstein Class" Polarization: The Epstein files have transitioned from a general scandal to a specific political bludgeon. Democrats are using the unsealed documents to pressure the administration to fire Cabinet members (Lutnick) and to highlight alleged

ties between Trump and Epstein ([Source](#), [Source](#)). Republicans, led by Bondi, are refocusing the narrative on Democratic figures like Hakeem Jeffries and Bill Clinton mentioned in the same files ([Source](#), [Source](#)).

HYPOTHESES AND FUTURE LEGISLATIVE OUTLOOK

Impending DHS Shutdown: Given Speaker Johnson's refusal to concede on ICE reforms and Leader Thune's preference for a stopgap ([Source](#), [Source](#)), a partial shutdown of the Secret Service, Coast Guard, and TSA appears highly likely by Saturday morning. The political fallout will depend on the duration and the impact on air travel during the spring season.

Judicial Review of Executive Authority: The House's decision to toll the clock on tariff challenges until July ([Source](#), [Source](#)) suggests the GOP is betting on a favorable Supreme Court ruling regarding the International Emergency Economic Powers Act (IEEPA). If the Court rules against the President, a wave of legislative challenges to current tariffs will immediately hit the floor.

Expansion of "Virginia's Law": The moral weight of the survivors present at the Capitol ([Source](#)) suggests that Schumer's bill to remove statutes of limitations may gain enough bipartisan traction to pass, especially as members of both parties seek to distance themselves from the "Epstein Class."

LEGISLATIVE ROUNDUP

The day was dominated by debates over election federalization, trade authority, and child safety technology.

BILLS DISCUSSED/DEBATED:

- **SAVE America Act (S. 1383):** Passed House. Requires proof of citizenship for voter registration and photo ID for federal elections. ([Source](#), [Source](#))
- **Virginia's Law:** Introduced. Eliminates the statute of limitations for federal civil claims brought by survivors of sex trafficking and exploitation. ([Source](#), [Source](#))
- **Law Enforcement Innovate to De-escalate Act (H.R. 2189):** Debated. Reclassifies less-than-lethal projectile devices (TASERS) to remove them from firearm regulations and excise taxes. ([Source](#), [Source](#))
- **Securing America's Critical Minerals Supply Act (H.R. 3617):** Debated. Amends the DOE Organization Act to assess supply chain vulnerabilities for minerals essential to the energy sector. ([Source](#), [Source](#))
- **Undersea Cable Protection Act (H.R. 261):** Debated. Streamlines permitting for fiber optic cables in marine sanctuaries by eliminating special use permits. ([Source](#), [Source](#))
- **H.J. Res 72:** Failed initially. A resolution to terminate the President's national emergency declaration regarding the northern border/fentanyl to effectively repeal Canadian tariffs. ([Source](#), [Source](#))

HEARINGS & PRESS EVENTS:

- **House Judiciary Oversight of the DOJ:** AG Pam Bondi grilled on Epstein file redactions, the "Arctic Frost" investigation into Congress, and ICE violence. ([Source](#), [Source](#))

- **House Homeland Security Subcom. on ICE/CBP:** Acting Director Lyons and Commissioner Scott testified on border security achievements and the hostile operating environment for agents. ([Source](#), [Source](#))
- **Kelly/Slotkin Press Conference:** Senators responded to the failed grand jury indictment regarding their military orders video. ([Source](#))
- **Senate Privacy & Technology Subcom.:** Telecommunications executives from Verizon, AT&T, and T-Mobile testified on Jack Smith's secret subpoenas of Senators' phone records. ([Source](#))
- **March for Life Rally:** VP Vance and Speaker Johnson addressed pro-life marchers, highlighting "Trump Investment Accounts" and expanded Mexico City Policies. ([Source](#))
- **CBO Economic Outlook:** Director Phillip Swagel presented the 10-year budget outlook, forecasting debt reaching 122% of GDP by 2036. ([Source](#))

ABOUT THIS REPORT

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 analysis. 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 major 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.

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