

TODAYS TRENDS ON CAPITOL HILL

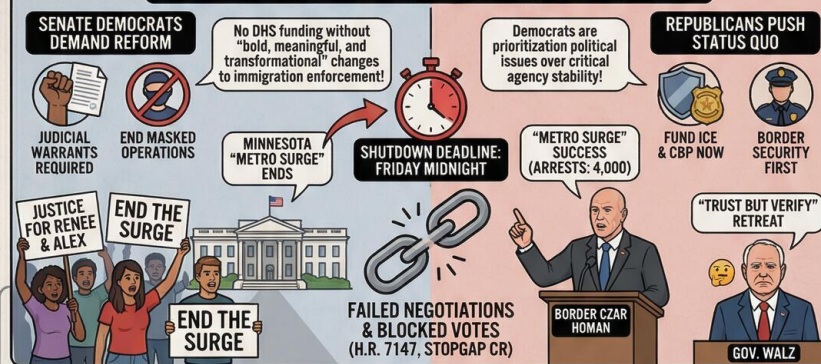
FEBRUARY 12, 2026

THE G D E L T PROJECT

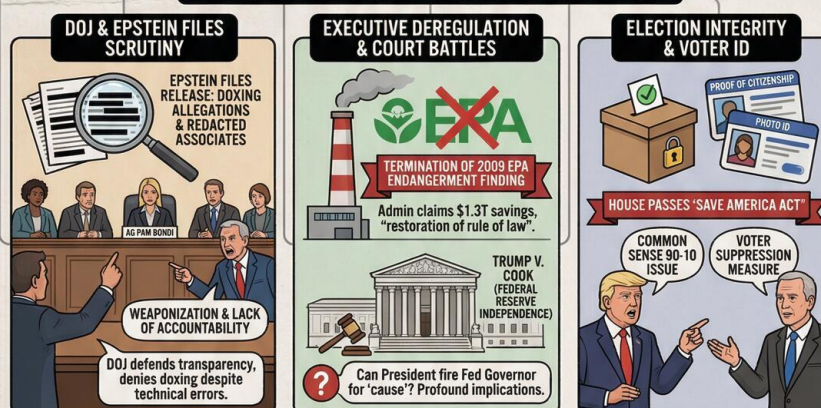
A DAY OF INTENSE POLITICAL COLLISION: NATIONAL SECURITY FUNDING, CIVIL LIBERTIES, AND EXECUTIVE DEREGULATION (FEBRUARY 12, 2026)

Shutdown Looms as Senate Deadlocks Over ICE Reforms & DHS Funding;
Multiple Fronts of Conflict Emerge.

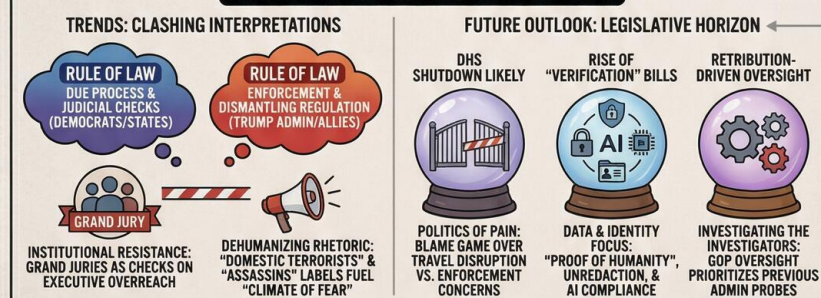
THE CENTRAL STALEMATE: DHS FUNDING & ICE REFORMS



SIMULTANEOUS EXECUTIVE & JUDICIAL CONFLICTS



DEEP DIVE: TRENDS & FUTURE OUTLOOK



LEGISLATIVE ROUNDUP (KEY BILLS & HEARINGS)

- H.R. 7147 (DHS Funding - Blocked)
- SB 53 (CA AI Safety)
- MN Operations Hearing
- NTSB Air Safety Hearing
- SAVE America Act (Voter ID - Passed House)
- DOJ Oversight Hearing
- SEC Chair Testimony

TODAYS TRENDS ON CAPITOL HILL

FEBRUARY 12, 2026

A DAY OF INTENSE POLITICAL
COLLISION OVER NATIONAL
SECURITY FUNDING, CIVIL
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DEREGULATION

DAY-AT-A-GLANCE

February 12, 2026, was defined by a critical breakdown in negotiations over the **Department of Homeland Security (DHS)** funding, with a partial government shutdown looming as the Friday midnight deadline approaches. Senate Democrats blocked a motion to proceed to a full-year funding bill and rejected a two-week stopgap measure, insisting on dramatic legislative reforms to **ICE** and **CBP** conduct, including mandates for judicial warrants and an end to masked enforcement operations ([Source](#), [Source](#), [Source](#)). Simultaneously, **Border Czar Tom Homan** announced the conclusion of the "Metro Surge" in Minnesota, a move Governor Tim Walz characterized as a "trust but verify" face-saving retreat following the fatal shootings of two U.S. citizens ([Source](#), [Source](#)).

The **Department of Justice (DOJ)** faced severe scrutiny as **Attorney General Pam Bondi** testified before the House Judiciary Committee. The hearing was dominated by explosive exchanges regarding the **Epstein**

Files, with lawmakers accusing the department of doxing survivors while redacting the names of powerful associates ([Source](#), [Source](#)). Meanwhile, the **Trump Administration** announced the single largest deregulatory action in U.S. history, officially terminating the 2009 EPA Endangerment Finding to lower automobile costs, while the **Supreme Court** heard arguments on the legality of the President's firing of Federal Reserve Governor Lisa Cook, a case with profound implications for the independence of the central bank ([Source](#), [Source](#)).

MAJOR DEVELOPMENTS

National Security Funding and the DHS Stalemate

- The Senate failed to reach the 60-vote threshold to advance the House-passed DHS funding bill, H.R. 7147, as Democrats remained unified in their demand for ICE reforms ([Source](#)).
- Senator Katie Britt (R-AL) attempted to pass a two-week continuing resolution (CR) via unanimous consent to ensure TSA and Coast Guard personnel receive paychecks, but Senator Chris Murphy (D-CT) objected, citing the administration's "lawless" enforcement tactics ([Source](#)).
- House Leader Hakeem Jeffries (D-NY) affirmed that House Democrats will not support any DHS funding without "bold, meaningful, and transformational" changes to immigration enforcement ([Source](#)).
- Majority Leader John Thune (R-SD) accused Democrats of "slow-walking" negotiations and prioritizing a political issue over the stability of critical agencies like FEMA and the Secret Service ([Source](#)).

Immigration Enforcement and the Minnesota Surge

- Border Czar Tom Homan held a press conference in Minneapolis announcing that the "Metro Surge" would wind down, claiming success in arresting 4,000 "criminal aliens" and locating 3,364 missing unaccompanied children ([Source](#), [Source](#)).
- Minnesota Governor Tim Walz and AG Keith Ellison rejected the "sanctuary state" label, arguing that the surge caused "generational trauma" and economic ruin, and demanded independent investigations into the deaths of Renee Good and Alex Pretti ([Source](#), [Source](#)).
- AG Ellison requested a full transparent accounting of all individuals detained during the surge and an end to the practice of agents wearing masks ([Source](#)).

The Epstein Files and DOJ Accountability

- Attorney General Pam Bondi defended the DOJ's release of 3 million pages of Epstein documents, characterizing the administration as the most transparent in history despite technical errors that exposed victim identities ([Source](#)).
- Representative Jamie Raskin (D-MD) and other Democrats highlighted specific emails suggesting the redaction of names belonging to powerful Trump associates, including Secretary Howard Lutnick, while survivors in the room indicated the DOJ has refused to meet with them ([Source](#), [Source](#)).
- Bondi confirmed that there are "pending investigations" related to the Epstein files but focused much of her testimony on plummeting murder rates and drug seizures ([Source](#), [Source](#)).

Deregulatory and Executive Actions

- President Trump and EPA Administrator Lee Zeldin announced the repeal of the 2009 Endangerment Finding, claiming the move would save consumers \$1.3 trillion in regulatory costs and \$2,400 per new vehicle ([Source](#)).
- The administration framed the repeal as a restoration of the "rule of law," arguing that the original finding had no basis in the Clean Air Act ([Source](#)).
- The Supreme Court heard *Trump v. Cook*, weighing whether the President has the authority to fire a Federal Reserve Governor for "cause" based on alleged pre-office mortgage application errors ([Source](#)).

Voter ID and Election Integrity

- The House passed the **SAVE America Act**, which requires proof of citizenship for voter registration and a photo ID for federal elections ([Source](#)).
- Speaker Mike Johnson (R-LA) and GOP leadership called the bill a "90-10 issue" of common sense, while Democrats labeled it a "voter suppression" measure targeting rural and marginalized communities ([Source](#), [Source](#)).

DEEP DIVE: TRENDS AND THEMES

The Crisis of Constitutional "Rule of Law" Interpretations

The day's events highlight a profound divergence in the interpretation of the "rule of law." The Trump Administration and its allies repeatedly used the phrase to describe the enforcement of federal immigration statutes and the dismantling of the "regulatory state" ([Source](#), [Source](#)). Conversely, Congressional

Democrats and state officials in Minnesota and New York used the same phrase to describe the necessity of judicial warrants, due process, and the protection of citizens from "rogue" federal agencies ([Source](#), [Source](#)). This is most visible in the **Supreme Court** case regarding the Federal Reserve, where the definition of "for cause" removal has become a proxy for the broader battle over executive power versus institutional independence ([Source](#)).

Institutional Resistance and the Grand Jury as a "Barrier"

A burgeoning theme is the role of independent citizens—specifically grand juries—as a check on executive overreach. The failure of federal prosecutors to secure indictments against six Democratic lawmakers for advising the military, and the similar failure to indict New York AG Letitia James, was framed by lawmakers as a vindication of the founders' intent for the grand jury to stand between the government and the people ([Source](#), [Source](#)). This trend suggests that the administration's "lawfare" strategy is facing friction within the judicial system itself ([Source](#)).

The Dehumanization of Political Opponents

The rhetoric used by high-ranking officials reached a fever pitch. Lawmakers noted that **Secretary Noem** and **Stephen Miller** labeled U.S. citizens killed in Minneapolis as "domestic terrorists" and "assassins" before investigations were complete ([Source](#), [Source](#)). This linguistic escalation is being used to justify aggressive enforcement tactics and to silence dissent, creating a "climate of fear" that lawmakers argue leads to self-censorship among the media and business leaders ([Source](#)).

HYPOTHESES AND FUTURE LEGISLATIVE OUTLOOK

DHS Funding and the "Politics of Pain"

A partial DHS shutdown appears likely by Friday midnight. Republicans are betting that the public will blame Democrats for "defunding the police" and disrupting air travel ([Source](#), [Source](#)). Democrats are betting that the public's revulsion at the Minneapolis videos will outweigh the inconvenience of travel delays ([Source](#)). Expect a "skinny" CR or a "carve-out" bill to emerge next week to fund the Coast Guard and TSA if the shutdown causes significant economic friction.

The Rise of "Verification" Legislation

The controversy surrounding the Epstein files and the SAVE Act suggests a shift toward legislative fights over **data and identity**. We may see new proposals regarding the "unredaction" of federal records and more stringent requirements for how the DOJ handles sensitive personal information ([Source](#)). On the financial side, the SEC hearing indicates that **"Proof of Humanity"** tools and **AI-driven** compliance will become central to upcoming market structure bills ([Source](#), [Source](#)).

Retribution-Driven Oversight

The House Judiciary Committee's focus on "Arctic Frost" and the surveillance of Republican phone records signals that GOP oversight will continue to prioritize investigating the investigators of the previous administration ([Source](#)). This ensures that "weaponization" will remain the primary lens through which all DOJ activities are viewed for the remainder of the session.

LEGISLATIVE ROUNDUP

The House prioritized election integrity and law enforcement tools, while the Senate remained deadlocked over national security funding and ICE conduct. Significant attention was also paid to military quality of life and the regulation of emerging technologies.

BILLS DISCUSSED/DEBATED:

- **H.R. 7147 - DHS Funding Bill:** A full-year funding bill for Homeland Security. Senate Democrats blocked a motion to proceed, demanding reforms to ICE and CBP ([Source](#)).
- **H.R. 4553 - Stopgap CR:** A two-week funding extension for DHS intended to allow for continued negotiations. Senate Democrats blocked it via objection ([Source](#)).
- **SAVE America Act:** Passed the House; requires proof of citizenship to register to vote and photo ID to cast ballots in federal elections ([Source](#)).
- **H.R. 2189 - Law Enforcement Innovate to De-escalate Act:** A bill to stop the ATF from classifying less-than-lethal weapons (tasers) as firearms. Passed the House ([Source](#)).
- **The Ticket Act:** Bipartisan legislation to mandate all-in price transparency and ban "ghost" or speculative ticketing ([Source](#)).
- **SB 53 (California):** A landmark AI safety bill requiring catastrophic risk disclosures and safety testing for large models ([Source](#)).
- **American Music Tourism Act:** Bipartisan bill aimed at supporting economic development through live music ([Source](#)).

HEARINGS & PRESS EVENTS:

- **House Judiciary Hearing on DOJ Oversight:** AG Pam Bondi testified on the Epstein files, immigration, and crime rates. Hostile exchanges occurred over victim doxing ([Source](#)).
- **Senate Homeland Security Hearing on Minnesota Operations:** Featured MN AG Keith Ellison and ICE Director Todd Lyons debating the "Metro Surge" and use of force ([Source](#)).
- **White House EPA Announcement:** President Trump and Lee Zeldin announced the rollback of the 2009 Endangerment Finding ([Source](#)).
- **Senate Personnel Subcommittee:** Senior enlisted leaders testified on military quality of life, focusing on mold in barracks, child-care shortages, and health care access ([Source](#)).
- **Border Czar Press Conference:** Tom Homan announced the end of the Minneapolis enforcement surge ([Source](#)).
- **SEC Chair Testimony:** Chair Atkins discussed making "IPOs Great Again" and ending "regulation by enforcement" in the digital asset space ([Source](#)).
- **Senate Commerce Hearing on Air Safety:** NTSB Chair Jennifer Homendy testified on systemic FAA failures following a midair collision near Reagan National ([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 under-

stand 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.

For questions or suggestions, please contact kalev.leetaru5@gmail.com. You can also learn more about the GDEL T Project at <https://blog.gdel tproject.org/> and the Internet Archive's TV News Archive at <https://archive.org/details/tv>.