

# TODAYS TRENDS ON CAPITOL HILL

FEBRUARY 14, 2026

THE GDELT PROJECT

## LEGISLATIVE STANDOFF TRIGGERS DHS SHUTDOWN AMID GLOBAL DIPLOMATIC REALIGNMENT & DOMESTIC TENSIONS

FEBRUARY 14, 2026

DAY-AT-A-GLANCE



### DHS FUNDING LAPSE & PARTIAL SHUTDOWN (20260214-49, 20260214-54)

**SHUTDOWN**  
  
TSA, FEMA, Coast Guard  
Unpaid & Severely Impacted.  
Funding Expired Midnight, Feb 14.

**FUNDED**  
  
ICE & CBP Remains Operational  
via Previous Appropriations  
(Shielded from Shutdown).

- Senate Democrats demands for ICE/CBP reforms: remove masks, mandatory warrants, and mandatory warrants issues.
- independent investigations mandatory, mandatory warrants, independent investigations.
- White House stalemate demand the co-sponsor for ICE/CBP nations appropriations.



### CONCLUSION OF THE MINNESOTA "ICE SURGE" (20260214-26, 20260214-46)

**SURGE ENDS**  
  
Twin Cities  
Homan Claims Public Safety Victory.  
Thousands of Public Safety Threats Removed.

Economic Damages & Civil Rights Probes.  
\$203 Million in Economic Losses (Jan alone); Hotel Cancellations >\$5M; Small Business Revenue Loss \$80M; Ongoing Investigations into Deaths of Renee Good & Alex Pretti. Demands for Federal Reimbursement & Joint Probes.



### GLOBAL SECURITY & DIPLOMATIC SHIFTS IN MUNICH (20260214-50, 20260214-55, 20260214-61)

**TRANSATLANTIC ALLIANCE: Divergent Paths**  
  
"Western Civilization" "America First"  
Secretary of State Marco Rubio Advocates Western Foreign Policy  
"European Sovereignty" "More European NATO" 5% GDP Defense Spending  
Chancellor Merz and PM Starmer calling for European Sovereignty  
The European leaders calibrate expectations and know the shift towards "Sovereign Europe" to compete in the of US seeds development, to regeer and less reliance on the US.

**GLOBAL HOTSPOTS**  
  
IRAN: Potential Regime Change (Senator Graham Prediction)  
CUBA: Communist Dictatorship Collapse by End of 2026  
UKRAINE: Stalemate & Zelensky's Warning Against Territorial Concessions  
GREENLAND: Future Status Discussions



### DOJ OVERSIGHT & THE EPSTEIN FILES (20260214-3, 20260214-62, 20260214-64)

**Epstein File Release & Redaction Controversy**  
(20260214-3, 20260214-9)  
  
3 Million Files Released; Accusations of Improper Redaction & Victim Identity Exposure.

**Section 702 "Arctic Frost" Investigation**  
(20260214-3, 20260214-62)  
  
Attorney General Pam Bondi  
Probe into Alleged Unconstitutional Surveillance of Republican Members of Congress by Special Counsel Jack Smith.

**Gislaine Maxwell Deposition**  
(20260214-64, 20260214-65)  
  
Presidential Pardon  
Invoked Fifth Amendment; Counsel Signals Interest in Clemency for Testimony.



### DEEP DIVE: TRENDS, THEMES, & FUTURE LEGISLATIVE OUTLOOK

**INSTITUTIONAL WEAPONIZATION & EROSION OF NORMS**  
(20260214-62, 20260214-8, 20260214-10)  
  
Growing Perception of Government as Tool for Political Retribution; Breakdown in Oversight Decorum (Bondi vs. Raskin); Concerns over Election Integrity due to Domestic Law Enforcement Raids.

**THE "SOVEREIGN EUROPE" DOCTRINE**  
(20260214-50, 20260214-56, 20260214-63)  
  
Europe Preparing for "America Alone" Risk; Move towards 5% Defense Spending, Nuclear Deterrence, and "Arctic Century" Security Framework.

**NATIONALIZATION OF ELECTION INTEGRITY**  
(20260214-3, 20260214-29, 20260214-48)  
  
Republican Pivot towards Federal Standards (Voter ID, Proof of Citizenship) as "Critical Infrastructure" Needs (MEGA Act, SAVE America Act).

**HYPOTHESES & FUTURE LEGISLATIVE OUTLOOK**  
  
DHS Shutdown Likely Persists Through President's Day Recess (Hardline Demands & House GOP Out)  
Secondary Sanctions on Russian Energy Buyers to Become Bipartisan Flashpoint (Senator Graham's Bill Could Jam White House China Summit)  
Emerging Interest in "Public AI" Movement for Non-Corporate, Government-Sponsored AI Model

LEGISLATIVE ROUNDUP  
BILLS DISCUSSED/DEBATED

• MEGA Act  
• SAVE America Act

• Semiquincentennial Congressional Time Capsule Act  
• CREDIT/CLARITY Act

• Chloe Cole Act  
• Hearing Protection Act

# TODAYS TRENDS ON CAPITOL HILL

FEBRUARY 14, 2026

---

## GEOPOLITICAL FRICTION IN MUNICH AMIDST DHS SHUTDOWN AND DOMESTIC OVERSIGHT EXTREMES

### DAY-AT-A-GLANCE

---

February 14, 2026, was defined by a **partial government shutdown** of the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) following a legislative stalemate over **ICE enforcement reforms**. While funding for ICE and Customs and Border Protection (CBP) remains intact through prior appropriations, essential agencies including the **Coast Guard, TSA, FEMA, and CISA** are operating without pay ([Source](#), [Source](#)). House Democratic Leader Hakeem Jeffries blamed the lapse on the Trump administration's refusal to require judicial warrants for immigration raids or independent investigations into recent federal agent-involved shootings in Minnesota ([Source](#), [Source](#)). Simultaneously, **Border Czar Tom Homan** announced the end of "Operation Metro Surge" in Minneapolis, claiming success in removing criminal threats, while local officials reported \$203 million in economic and humanitarian damages ([Source](#), [Source](#)).

On the international stage, the **Munich Security Conference** highlighted deep fissures between the U.S. and its European allies. Secre-

tary of State **Marco Rubio** offered a message of "spiritual and cultural" unity while defending the administration's transactional approach to NATO and its interest in **Greenland** ([Source](#)). Ukrainian President **Volodymyr Zelensky** expressed alarm over U.S. pressure to concede territory to Russia, emphasizing that only the U.S. has the power to stop Putin ([Source](#)). Domestically, **Attorney General Pam Bondi** faced a combative House Judiciary hearing regarding the **Epstein investigation files** and allegations of political targeting, while **Ghislaine Maxwell** invoked her Fifth Amendment rights in a virtual deposition, with her counsel dangling a promise of full cooperation in exchange for **presidential clemency** ([Source](#), [Source](#), [Source](#)).

### MAJOR DEVELOPMENTS

---

#### DHS Funding Lapse and ICE Conflict

- A partial government shutdown began at midnight after negotiations between Senate Democrats and the White House failed to produce a deal on immigration enforcement restrictions ([Source](#)).
- Federal officials from the Coast Guard, TSA, and FEMA testified that a prolonged lapse will degrade national security posture and cause severe financial hardship for front-line workers ([Source](#), [Source](#)).
- Border Czar Tom Homan declared the ICE surge in Minnesota complete, claiming 4,000 arrests of "public safety threats," while Governor Tim Walz demanded the federal government pay for the economic damage caused to small businesses ([Source](#), [Source](#)).
- Minneapolis Mayor Jacob Frey released an impact assessment detailing 76,000 residents in need of urgent relief and \$203 million in total economic impact ([Source](#)).

## Geopolitical Impasse in Munich

- Secretary of State Rubio and German Chancellor Merz presented diverging visions of the future; Merz called for a "sovereign Europe" to take primary responsibility for its own defense as the U.S. pivots focus ([Source](#), [Source](#)).
- President Zelensky criticized the Trump administration's "all-at-once" deal structure, arguing that security guarantees must precede any territorial compromises ([Source](#)).
- Senator Mark Kelly (D-AZ) reported that death threats against him increased following the President's "hang them" rhetoric regarding instructions to the military to ignore illegal orders ([Source](#)).
- The status of Greenland remains a point of contention; Danish and Greenlandic leaders termed U.S. acquisition pressure "unacceptable" and "outrageous," despite the U.S. framing it as a security necessity ([Source](#)).

## Oversight and Judicial Conflict

- Attorney General Pam Bondi defended the DOJ's release of 3 million pages of Epstein files, despite admitting that some victim information was erroneously unmasked while powerful associates' names remained redacted ([Source](#), [Source](#)).
- Ghislaine Maxwell refused to answer questions during a House Oversight deposition but signaled a willingness to talk if granted clemency, asserting that Presidents Trump and Clinton were innocent of wrongdoing ([Source](#), [Source](#)).
- The House Administration Committee debated the **Make Elections Great Again Act**, with Republicans pushing for nationwide photo ID and proof of citizenship for federal voting ([Source](#)).

## Regulatory and Environmental Shifts

- EPA Administrator Lee Zeldin announced the formal repeal of the Obama-era **Endangerment Finding**, removing the legal foundation for federal greenhouse gas regulation ([Source](#), [Source](#)).
- SEC Chair Paul Atkins testified on reducing the "information overload" in corporate filings and providing regulatory clarity for digital assets ([Source](#)).
- FDA Commissioner Marty Makary announced a review of food additives **BHA and BHT** and defended the removal of certain health warnings on hormone replacement therapy products ([Source](#)).

## DEEP DIVE: TRENDS AND THEMES

---

**Leveraging Federal Power for Political Intelligence:** A recurring theme is the alleged use of federal law enforcement to compel the production of state-level data. Multiple reports suggest the administration attempted to trade the withdrawal of ICE agents in Minnesota for access to the state's **voter rolls** ([Source](#), [Source](#)). This suggests a shift toward utilizing executive enforcement mechanisms as leverage in domestic political data acquisition.

**The "Transactional Ally" Doctrine:** The Munich conference underscored that "America First" has evolved into a doctrine where alliances are conditional on both spending (the 5% GDP target) and acquiescence to specific U.S. regional interests, such as **Arctic dominance** and **Greenland** ([Source](#), [Source](#)). European leaders are increasingly responding by seeking "strategic autonomy" rather than traditional reliance on the U.S. security umbrella ([Source](#)).



**Judicial Weaponization and Victim Silencing:** The Bondi hearing and the Maxwell deposition highlight a trend of **selective transparency**. The unmasking of 1,200 Epstein survivors while redacting associates like Lex Wexner (until corrected under pressure) points to a chaotic or intentionally intimidating disclosure process ([Source](#), [Source](#), [Source](#)). The administration's focus on "lawfare" against political figures like James Comey and Letitia James contrasts with the relative impunity described by victims of ICE operations ([Source](#), [Source](#)).

## HYPOTHESES AND FUTURE LEGISLATIVE OUTLOOK

---

**DHS Funding Stalemate:** Expect a **protracted shutdown** for non-ICE agencies. Since ICE and CBP are already funded via the "Big Beautiful Bill," the White House has little incentive to concede on Democratic reform demands. Legislative efforts to "de-link" funding for the Coast Guard and TSA may gain traction but face a presidential veto if they don't include broader enforcement authorities ([Source](#), [Source](#)).

**Nationalization of Elections:** The administration is likely to push the **SAVE Act** and **MEGA Act** as a response to perceived "sanctuary state" defiance. If these acts fail in the Senate, look for executive orders attempting to withhold federal election security grants from states that refuse to turn over voter data to the DOJ ([Source](#), [Source](#)).

**Climate Regulation Collapse:** The repeal of the Endangerment Finding will trigger immediate **litigation in the D.C. Circuit**. Legislative efforts to codify the finding will likely be introduced by House Democrats as a "marker" for the midterms, but have no path to passage in the current Congress ([Source](#), [Source](#)).

## LEGISLATIVE ROUNDUP

---

Legislative activity focused on codifying the administration's "America First" domestic agenda, particularly regarding election integrity and the removal of environmental and financial regulations. Congressional Democrats focused on counter-measures to limit ICE's operational scope and protect civil servants from shutdown-related pay lapses.

### BILLS DISCUSSED/DEBATED:

- **Make Elections Great Again (MEGA) Act:** Establishes baseline federal standards requiring photo ID, proof of citizenship for registration, and ending ballot receipt on Election Day ([Source](#)).
- **SAVE America Act:** Closes loopholes in the National Voter Registration Act to require documentary proof of citizenship for voter registration ([Source](#), [Source](#)).
- **Semi-quincentennial Congressional Time Capsule Act (S. 3705):** Authorizes a time capsule at the Capitol Visitor Center to be opened in 2276 ([Source](#)).
- **Chloe Cole Act:** Proposed legislation to create a private right of action for individuals who received gender-affirming care as minors ([Source](#)).
- **Credit Act:** Senate legislation aimed at establishing clear regulatory "rules of the road" for digital assets and crypto-innovation ([Source](#)).
- **Empowering Main Street America Act:** A capital formation proposal to help small businesses access public markets by expanding accredited investor definitions ([Source](#)).
- **Clarity Act:** Digital asset marketing legislation to provide comprehensive rules for stablecoins and digital assets ([Source](#)).

## HEARINGS & PRESS EVENTS:

- **DOJ Oversight Hearing (AG Pam Bondi):** Investigated the release of Epstein investigation files and the creation of a National Fraud Division ([Source](#), [Source](#)).
- **DHS Shutdown Impact Hearing:** Testimony from TSA, Coast Guard, FEMA, and CISA leaders on the consequences of the funding lapse ([Source](#)).
- **SEC Chair Paul Atkins Testimony:** Addressed digital asset regulation, IPO modernization, and variable interest entities related to China ([Source](#)).
- **ICE Drawdown Press Conference (Tom Homan):** Announced the conclusion of the Minnesota surge and transition of command back to field offices ([Source](#)).
- **Ghislaine Maxwell Deposition:** A virtual deposition where the witness invoked the 5th Amendment regarding the Epstein trafficking ring ([Source](#)).
- **House Democratic Hearing on ICE Treatment:** Featured testimony from victims and law enforcement on alleged ICE brutality and lack of warrants ([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.

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.gdelproject.org/> and the Internet Archive's TV News Archive at <https://archive.org/details/tv>.