TODAYS TRENDS ON CAPITOL HILL

AUGUST 28, 2026

THE GDELT PROJECT



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THE TRUMP ADMINISTRATION PROJECTS GLOBAL DOMINANCE VIA KINETIC CONFLICT AND ECONOMIC STATECRAFT AMIDST DEEPENING MIDTERM POLARIZATION

DAY-AT-A-GLANCE

On August 28, 2026, the Trump administration demonstrated a multi-front strategy of projecting "American Greatness" through aggressive geopolitical maneuvers, landmark cultural rebrandings, and the consolidation of executive power. The overarching narrative of the day centered on **Operation Epic Fury**, a 32-day kinetic conflict with Iran that the President characterized as an absolute military triumph, resulting in the evisceration of the Iranian Navy and Air Force. This military posture is inextricably linked to a deepening trade war with Canada, punctuated by the unilateral **renaming of Lake Ontario to "Lake America"** and the imposition of 50% tariffs on Canadian goods. The administration is effectively leveraging these external conflicts to frame the upcoming 2026 midterms as a "contrast election" between common-sense nationalism and a rising insurgent left, which Speaker Mike Johnson characterizes as dark and dangerous Marxism.

Simultaneously, the administration face critical institutional and economic headwinds. The Federal Reserve, under newly appointed Chair Kevin Warsh, signaled a hawkish turn at the Jackson Hole Symposium, acknowledging that inflation remains above the 2% target and refusing to rule out further interest rate hikes. This economic anxiety is compounded by the "We the Doers" report, which highlights the operational toll of the **Department of Government Efficiency (DOGE)** mass firings, noting that removing a single federal employee for cause now takes an average of 21 months under reformed protocols. In the social sector, a landmark **$18 billion settlement** was reached with Meta over claims of harming children's mental health, marking a massive regulatory victory for a bipartisan coalition of 47 states led by Virginia Attorney General Jay Jones.

The convergence of these events suggests an administration attempting to bypass traditional diplomatic and legislative channels through "constructionist" executive actions. By awarding the Congressional Space Medal of Honor to Artemis II astronauts and announcing a new U.S. Space Academy, the President is attempting to cement a legacy of frontier expansion. However, the underlying domestic reality remains one of intense polarization, with Democratic candidates like Abdul El-Sayed in Michigan and Jamie Ager in North Carolina framing the administration's policies as catalysts for an affordability crisis that is straining working families.

MAJOR DEVELOPMENTS

- **Escalation of Operation Epic Fury:** President Trump reported that Iranian nuclear sites have been "obliterated" by B-2 bombers and the Iranian Navy has been entirely destroyed. The U.S. has maintained a total blockade of the Strait of Hormuz, with Trump claiming that "not one ship" has bypassed U.S. control, though Iran disputes this as a lie.
- **Lake America Executive Order:** Amidst a trade deadlock with Prime Minister Mark Carney, the President signed an order renaming Lake Ontario to reflect its status as an "American Lake," citing Canada's "ripping us off" on trade and military defense costs.
- **Meta $18 Billion Settlement:** Meta agreed to pay massive penalties and implement strict age verification and screen time limits (2-hour daily caps) to settle state-led lawsuits regarding child safety and platform addiction.
- **Federal Reserve Hawkish Shift:** Fed Chair Kevin Warsh used his first major address to move away from "forward guidance," favoring a "quieter, more purposeful Fed" and indicating that current inflation levels (3.7% PCE) require disciplined monetary restraint.
- **Space Medal and Academy Awards:** The Artemis II crew received the Congressional Space Medal of Honor for their record-breaking lunar flyby, while the President announced the creation of a West Point-equivalent **U.S. Space Academy**.
- **Election Security Declassification:** The President released intelligence alleging that China stole 220 million U.S. voter files and worked to manufacture illegal ballots, using these claims to demand the passage of the **Save America Act**.

KEY GOVERNANCE TOPICS

Armed Conflict & Militarization The U.S. military is currently in a state of high-intensity operational engagement. Beyond the 32-day war in Iran, the President touted a "masterful" seizure of Venezuela in a matter of minutes, turning it into a joint-venture partner for oil production. The militarization of space was also highlighted as a success of the **Space Force**, with Trump noting that military victories in the Middle East and South America were facilitated by space-based intelligence.

Macroeconomics & Trade The economic landscape is defined by aggressive protectionism. The President defended his trade war with Canada, characterizing the country as the "worst to deal with on trade" and signaling that 400% tariffs on U.S. dairy will no longer be tolerated. Domestically, the tension between the Treasury and the Fed is palpable; Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent's decision to double government buybacks of long-term debt is seen by critics as a move that could undermine the Fed's attempts to tighten financial conditions.

Information Warfare & Disinformation The administration is aggressively challenging the "Deep State" narrative. The President accused NBC and ABC of being "part of a plot" for refusing to cover his election security speech. Concurrently, allegations of a "Pentagon troll army" emerged, centered on a PENTAGON staffer using a pseudonym to post

pro-administration memes, suggesting a sophisticated domestic influence operation.

Global Health & Biosecurity A public health crisis is emerging in the shadow of anti-vaccination sentiment. Measles deaths in Pennsylvania and Lancaster County have become a flashpoint, with progressives like Thom Hartmann calling for the impeachment of HHS Secretary Robert F. Kennedy Jr. for allegedly lying to Congress about his anti-vaccine activities in Samoa. RFK Jr. himself continues to focus on the Presidential Fitness Test as a solution to a 20% childhood obesity rate.

Tech Sovereignty & AI AI is being integrated into warfighting at the "tactical edge." The Atlantic Council reported that AI-enabled

automatic target recognition is now being deployed in UKRAINE and IRAN. However, New Jersey Governor Mikie Sherrill is leading a state-level pushback against data centers, signing legislation to hold developers accountable for noise, water usage, and power consumption.

DEEP DIVE: TRENDS AND THEMES

The Constructionist Presidency A recurring theme is President Trump's self-identification as a "builder" rather than a bureaucrat. Commerce Secretary Howard Lutnick argued that the President should serve as the construction manager for the Kennedy Center to ensure it is finished on time and on budget. This "constructionist" approach extends to geopolitics, where renaming geographic features (Lake America, Gulf of America) is used as a tool of sovereign assertion.

Normalization of Deviance in Federal Governance The "We the Doers" advocacy group, composed of former federal employees, argues that the DOGE process has created a system of "random removals" that replaces civil servants with higher-priced contractors. This is described as a "normalization of deviance," where arbitrary cuts are celebrated as efficiency even as they destabilize critical infrastructure like the IRS and the nuclear stockpile.

The Affordability/Conflict Paradox While the President touts 81 record stock market highs, local candidates report that farmers and working families are being "overwhelmed" by the cost of living. There is a growing disconnect between national-level metrics and the "kitchen table" reality of impossible choices between paying for insulin or rent, exacerbated by the economic spillover of the Iran war and Canadian tariffs.

INTERNAL DYNAMICS & DOMESTIC INSTABILITY

- **Partisan Realignment in the South:** The 63rd Anniversary of the March on Washington highlights a heightened sense of urgency regarding voting rights. Reverend Al Sharpton and Minority Leader Hakeem Jeffries characterized the administration's policies as a **"modern-day lynching of rights"** and a return to Jim CROW tactics in the South.

- **GOP Intra-Party Fractures:** Tension is rising between Trump and traditional Republicans. Former Senator John Cornyn's runoff concession speech included a warning that "those who show up decide for those who do not," while Speaker Mike Johnson is forced to balance a "one-vote margin" in the House by recruiting "happy warriors" like Monica De La Cruz to fend off a socialist surge.
- **Labor and the Working Class:** The UAW and other unions are being courted by both sides. Democratic Senate candidate Abdul El-Sayed frames himself as a "son of immigrants who came to build cars," positioning the labor movement as a bulwark against corporate corruption, while Republicans like Scott Paul (Alliance for American Manufacturing) favor strategic tariffs to protect union jobs.

EXTERNAL DYNAMICS & GLOBAL POSTURE

The world is increasingly framed by the administration as a zero-sum "Space Race" and "Resource War." The President's posture toward allies is transactional; he argued that Canada must be treated as an independent nation, not a "51st state," if they refuse to pay for U.S. icebreakers and military protection. This is contrasted with a State Dinner for President Xi Jinping, where Trump used more diplomatic language, calling the U.S.-China connection "the most consequential relationship in world history," even as he privately accused China of the largest election data compromise in history.

In the Middle East, the U.S. is adopting a "decapitation" strategy. President Trump suggested that while **regime change** was not the original goal in Iran, it has occurred "by default" because their original leaders are dead. The President urged other nations to develop "some delayed courage" and take control of the Strait of Hormuz themselves, signaling a **selective isolationism** where the U.S. provides the military might but expects the world to pay for the resulting stability.

THE ECONOMIC ENVIRONMENT

The U.S. economy presents a jarring contrast between institutional resilience and individual distress, with the "Golden Age" narrative clashing with rising interest rates and sovereign debt concerns.

- **Key Economic Indicators:** The stock market has hit 81 record highs in 18 months. National debt has reached $40 trillion, with $19.2 trillion in outside investment reported. Inflation (PCE) stands at 3.7%.
- **Supply Chain Disruption:** The Canadian trade war has led to a boycott of American products in some northern regions, and the blockade of the Strait of Hormuz has **doubled gas and diesel prices** (per Jamie Ager and Thom Hartmann).
- **Corporate Vectors:** Meta's $18B settlement represents a "bargain" relative to its $1.45T market cap. Pancreatic cancer drug Robhiasen was approved but priced at $39,800 per month.
- **Resource Conflict:** Trump's energy independence claim is bolstered by millions of barrels from Venezuela, yet the Fed warns that commodity prices are rising.

LEADERSHIP CHANGES

Strategic realignments and high-profile vacancies define the current leadership

landscape, with the administration purging dissenters and elevating loyalists.

- **Lindsey Graham:** The "Giant of the Senate" died suddenly in July 2026. His sister, **Darlene Graham**, was appointed to his seat and recently won a primary runoff with Trump's endorsement.
- **Karoline Leavitt:** The White House Press Secretary announced her resignation to spend more time with her family, noting that Trump is his own "best spokesperson."
- **Kevin Warsh:** Effectively took over as Federal Reserve Chair, signaling an end to the era of "forward guidance."
- **Graham Platner:** The Democratic Senate nominee in Maine dropped out of the race following sexual assault allegations, which he denies as "false" and part of an "establishment plot."
- **Mike Rogers:** Former GOP Congressman is running for Senate in Michigan after moving from Florida, facing criticism for being an "election denier" to earn Trump's support.

EDITORIAL POSTURE & STORY HIERARCHY

The network's hierarchy prioritize **National Prestige** (Lake America, Space Medals) and **Partisan Conflict** (Speaker Johnson's tour) as the lead stories. The "Lake America" story serves as a highly visible, nationalistic distraction from the minefield bluff in the Strait of Hormuz (where many suspected mines were reportedly inflated trash bags). The **Buried Stories** include the severe humanitarian toll of the Iran war and the detailed failures of the DOGE process in the "We the Doers" report. The emotional tone oscillates between **triumphant nationalism** and **dire fear-mongering** regarding "Marxist" takeovers. A conspicuous omission is the lack of any embedded reporting from the Iran conflict, with all war data sourced exclusively from administration officials.

GEOPOLITICAL FRAMING

The administration's worldview is characterized by a "Lion vs. Hyena" spectrum, where traditional allies are viewed with suspicion and strongmen are viewed with a competitive respect.

- **COUNTRIES**
  - **USA:** Framed as "the hottest country in the world" and respectable like never before. Characterized by "pure American excellence."
  - **Canada:** Portrayed as an entitled debtor. Prime Minister Mark Carney is described by Trump as a "dingaling" who is "ripping us off" on trade and military defense.
  - **China:** A "sinister" actor that carried out the "largest compromise of election data in history," yet capable of being a "partner" if trade is "fixed."
  - **Iran:** Portrayed as a "death cult" that has been "brought back to the stone ages."
- **LEADERS**
  - **Donald Trump:** Framed as the "Greatest Builder in the World" and an "unstoppable" military leader. His framing is one of absolute competence and principled nationalism.

- **Vladimir Putin:** Characterized by Trump as "behaving quite well" regarding the Strait of Hormuz, suggesting a quiet alignment with Russian interests.
- **Hakeem Jeffries:** Framed by progressives as a "loyalist" and by Republicans as part of a "deeply out of touch" radical left.

- **NON-STATE & CORPORATE ACTORS**
  - **Meta:** Framed as a predator of children that finally met justice through a bipartisan coalition of states.
  - **Mexican Cartels:** Described as having "unlimited budgets" and "complete control" of the border during the Biden years.
  - **AIPAC:** Characterized by progressive Abdul El-Sayed as a force "that doesn't speak for me," signaling a major rift in Democratic donor dynamics.

INFORMATION WARFARE ENVIRONMENT

- **Election Denialism as State Policy:** The President is using declassified (and disputed) intelligence to create a "meta-narrative" of a rigged 2020 election to push for current legislative changes (Save America Act). This effectively weaponizes history to control future outcomes.
- **Narrative Seeding via Pseudonyms:** The exposure of a PENTAGON staffer using a social media pseudonym to attack the Army Secretary suggests a coordinated "troll army" effort to shape internal military policy via public outrage.
- **Minefield Deception:** Reports that Iran's "Hormuz Minefield" was built on trash bags suggests that both sides are engaging in psychological operations to influence war-risk insurance and commercial traffic without actual kinetic engagement.
- **Code-Switching and Pander-Gate:** Critics and rival candidates are attacking Jasmine Crockett for "code-switching," framing her rhetorical shifts as "pandering" to different demographics rather than genuine leadership.

HYPOTHESES AND FUTURE OUTLOOK

- **The 2030 Realignment:** Speaker Mike Johnson's "Bridge Election" theory suggests that Republicans are playing a long game. If they hold the House in 2026, the 2030 Census and reapportionment could create a "durable, common-sense conservative majority for a generation" as populations flee blue states.
- **Constitutional Crisis on Extradition:** Governor Greg Abbott's refusal to extradite an ICE agent to Minnesota until they "acknowledge their fault" in Medicaid fraud creates a dangerous precedent of inter-state legal warfare that could unravel the Full Faith and Credit Clause.
- **AI Judicial Paralysis:** Justice Ketanji Brown Jackson's warning about the "Shadow Docket" and AI-predicted outcomes suggests that the "Field of Dreams" effect (if you build it, they will come) will lead to a Supreme Court overwhelmed by emergency applications, effectively paralyzed by a hyper-accelerated legal environment.

STRATEGIC FORESIGHT

Short Term (1-4 Weeks): Expect Canada to launch its promised retaliatory tariffs on September 1st, potentially spiking prices on lumber and energy. Ground troops could be deployed to IRAN following the midterms if the President's "electric generating plant" ultimatum goes unanswered.

Medium Term (1-6 Months): The first mail-in ballots for the midterms in North Carolina will test the Supreme Court's recent ruling on "legitimacy." If Republicans flip the Michigan Senate seat, it will be seen as a referendum on the U.S.-Canada trade war.

Long Term (1-5 Years): The U.S. Space Academy will graduate its first class, and the 2028 nuclear-powered mission to Mars will serve as the administration's "Apollo Moment." Social Security will reach its insolvency cliff in 2032, making current legislative gridlock on the "flat tax" cap a generational crisis.

RISK ASSESSMENT

The current geopolitical and domestic trajectory presents five critical flashpoints that could lead to systemic failure.

- **Total Energy Grid Collapse:** Data centers now consume power equivalent to 80,000 homes each. Trigger: Lack of private investment in the grid. Likelihood: Moderate-High. Impact: Catastrophic. Mitigation: New Jersey style "fair share" legislation forcing tech companies to invest in infrastructure.
- **Escalation of Kinetic War with Iran:** The President has threatened to hit "each and every one of their electric generating plants." Trigger: Iran closing the Strait of Hormuz to non-American oil. Likelihood: Moderate. Impact: Global oil price spike to $200+/barrel. Mitigation: Exploiting Venezuelan reserves and "drill baby drill" expansion.
- **Election Legitimacy Crisis:** The President's release of intelligence regarding 220M voter files. Trigger: Narrow margins in 19 "jump ball" House seats. Likelihood: High. Impact: Civil unrest and institutional delegitimization. Mitigation: Passage of the Save America Act for universal voter ID.
- **Sovereignty Disintegration with Canada:** The renaming of Lake Ontario. Trigger: Canada shutting down the power supply to the five U.S. states it serves. Likelihood: Low. Impact: Regional blackout and collapse of USMCA. Mitigation: Mending ties with New York state leadership.
- **Biosecurity Outbreak:** The measles resurgence linked to Secretary RFK Jr.'s anti-vaccine posture. Trigger: Opening of schools in August/September. Likelihood: High. Impact: Wide-scale childhood mortality and strain on the healthcare system. Mitigation: Senate criminal referral of KENNEDY for lying about Samoan vaccinations.

GAPS & BLIND SPOTS

- **War Casualty Data:** The President reports only 13 American warriors lost, but there is no embedded press to verify these numbers or the scale of civilian casualties in Iran.

- **Minefield Phenomenon:** Conflicting reports on whether the Strait of Hormuz is actively mined or blocked by "inflated trash bags" suggests a massive intelligence gap regarding actual naval risks.
- **Venezuelan Resource Paradox:** Claims of "millions of barrels" from VENEZUELA working with us fail to address how a country taken "in minutes" can maintain stable industrial production under military occupation.
- **AI Labor Replacement:** Amazon's layoff of 16,000 people for AI replacement is presented as an anecdotal caller report, lacking a broader analysis of structural unemployment risks in the "Golden Age" economy.

CONTRARIAN NARRATIVE SCENARIOS

- **The Desperate Blockade:** Contrary to Trump's "unstoppable" narrative, the Strait of Hormuz blockade could be a desperate stall tactic. If U.S. munitions are indeed depleted, the blockade is a "paper tiger" designed to prevent a multi-front conflict with China before the U.S. can rearm.
- **The Canadian Leverage Play:** Prime Minister Carney's refusal to negotiate might not be "political theater" for Quebec, but a calculated leverage of the U.S. power grid. Canada may be waiting for the first winter storm to "flick the lights" and force a total U.S. capitulation on tariffs.
- **The Black Swan: U.S. Military Coup:** Progressive minister Christian Matthew suggested that "cabinet members will wake up and have an epiphany" and turn on the President. While unlikely, a sudden institutional "revolt" by the Joint Chiefs against "Operation Epic Fury" would represent a total collapse of civilian control.

RECOMMENDATIONS & IMPLICATIONS

For Statecraft/Public Sector:

- **Security:** Transition to a "service model" for military AI acquisition, as traditional shrink-wrap procurement is obsolete in the face of weekly model updates.
- **Economic:** Codify "most favored nation" drug pricing to prevent a reversal by future administrations.
- **Diplomatic:** Re-establish direct communication with Canadian trade ministers to bypass Howard Lutnick's "lawyer-only" deadlock.

For Private Sector/Investors:

- **Supply Chain:** Divest from Canadian imports affected by the 50% tariff and shift to domestic manufacturing or "Lake America" resources.
- **Regulatory Compliance:** Audit internal social media algorithms immediately to comply with the Meta settlement standards (KOSA) before state-level lawsuits expand.
- **Capital Allocation:** Invest in nuclear power for space and data centers, as energy has replaced chips as the "long pole" for AI and national security infrastructure.

LEGISLATIVE ROUNDUP

Congressional activity is currently dominated by emergency measures related to the Iran conflict, the transition of education power to the states, and the proposed U.S. Space Academy.

- **BILLS DISCUSSED/DEBATED:**

- **Save America Act:** Proposed to require universal photo voter ID and proof of citizenship for all federal elections.
- **One Big Beautiful Bill (Reconciliation):** The landmark bill that funded the Workforce Pell Program, education tax credits, and the Kennedy Center renovation.
- **Education Freedom Tax Credit:** Allows a $1700 tax credit for individuals to fund private school scholarships.
- **Disclose Act:** Seeking to unmask "dark money" in federal election cycles.
- **Dignity Act:** A bipartisan immigration reform bill currently blocked by the President.

- **HEARINGS & PRESS EVENTS:**

- **Jackson Hole Economic Policy Symposium:** Fed Chair Warsh's debut, establishing a principled hawkish stance.
- **Kennedy Center Emergency Hearing:** Litigation over adding Trump's name to the renovated cultural center.
- **Border Security Roundtables:** Republicans like Michael Whatley and Tano Tijerina characterizing fentanyl as a weapon of mass destruction.
- **Veterans Health Care Forums:** Senator Tim Kaine and Rep. Eugene Vindman addressing critical understaffing at new VA facilities.

KEY STORIES

- **Operation Epic Fury Status Update:** President Trump reports Iranian naval destruction and total blockade of the Strait of Hormuz 32 days into the war.
- **Renaming Lake Ontario:** Executive Order changes name to "Lake America" as trade retaliation against Canada.
- **Meta Settlement:** $18 billion paid to 47 states to settle child harm claims.
- **Space Medal Ceremony:** Artemis II astronauts honored; U.S. Space Academy announced.
- **Jackson Hole Keynote:** Fed Chair Warsh warns of inflation and ends forward guidance.
- **Darlene Graham Victory:** Lindsey Graham's sister wins South Carolina runoff to fill his seat.
- **We the Doers Report:** Formation of advocacy group highlighting federal worker instability after DOGE mass firings.
- **Kennedy Center Name Change Dispute:** Judge Cooper oversees hearing on adding Trump's name to the monument.
- **Measles Crisis:** Pennsylvania and Samoa outbreaks linked to RFK Jr.'s anti-vaccine rhetoric.
- **March on Washington 2026:** Al Sharpton leads "Defend the Vote" rally on 63rd MLK anniversary.
- **Mike Rogers FL/MI Residence Issue:** Senate candidate accused of being a "Florida Man" trying to represent Michigan.
- **Aero-Supersonic Renaissance:** BOOM Supersonic overture jet slated for 2030 flight.

- **Marley and Roscoe:** Howie Carr’s dog visits the command center in a light-hearted police blotter segment.
- **Arbuckle Coffee Glaze:** Historical analysis of egg-white and sugar coating that Americanized the beverage.
- **Marmot Terror in California:** Rodents stealing hiking shoes and chewing engine wires in Sequoia National Park.

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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