The Single-Column Edition

FROM § EACH

FRIDAY, 16 OCTOBER 2026 — THE MORNING EDITION FREE, FOREVER

Protester interrupts Maine Senate debate about data centers; debate about data centers interrupted by jokes about the protester

BY THE WRECKING CREW
The Remedy Desk

THE WRECKING CREW kept the blueprints from last week's job open on the bench. The chief ran the inventory out loud, because the job kept growing drawers. On September 25, Palm Beach County's commission reached into its own code and pulled out permitting authority that had been sitting there the whole time: a 6-0 vote, a one-year moratorium on any data center over 50 megawatts. Memphis had already used a different tool from a different drawer, a zoning fight paired with a primary ballot, to slow down Elon Musk's xAI. Washington State had its own tool, a utility-siting statute that predates this entire fight by years, still sitting on the shelf, never retired. Then two more tools turned up on the bench: Ohio Senator Bernie Moreno's bill to tax local data-center subsidies at 100 percent, and Texas governor candidate Gina Hinojosa's promise of a moratorium of her own if she wins.

Thursday night the job moved to a stage in Maine. The planner stood back and admired how the pieces kept finding each other without anybody planning it: zoning board, primary ballot, utility statute, a tax bill in Congress, a campaign promise in Texas, and now a debate floor. A protester stood up

... Continued on Page A214

THE WORD

§62 — 15 OCTOBER 2026

On Social Security

DEMOCRAT

78 CENTS

REPUBLICAN

NO TAX ON SOCIAL SECURITY

"My sister-in-law turned sixty-five this year, so she's the expert in our house now. She got the new deduction, six thousand dollars — but only through 2028, and it shrinks once you're over seventy-five thousand. And the tax people in Congress say about twenty-four million people will still pay tax on their benefits anyway. Then she showed me the trustees' report. The retirement fund runs out in the last part of 2032, and after that it pays seventy-eight percent. Excuse me, I forgot my hat. The deduction ends after 2028, and the fund after 2032. Which of those two was the one he promised nobody would hurt?" — Lou

... Continued on Page W62

Talarico outraises Paxton three to one; Musk closes the gap with a $158 million check.

BY RUTH
The Money Desk

Ken Paxton's side of the ledger read $18 million, a third of that. No adjective is required to see the gap.

This week the ledger added a line. Politico reported that Talarico alone outraised ten of the top Republican Senate candidates in the country, combined, over the same three months Paxton was being outraised three to one in his own race.

Then came the correction. The New York Times reported the same week that Elon Musk, the world's richest person, gave $158 million to a political group that spent that sum helping Paxton's Senate bid. CBS News, reporting the same donation, put the gift at over $150 million. Either figure is one check, from one donor, for roughly nine times what Paxton's own campaign had raised all quarter.

The check has a history. The New York Times calculated, using Federal Election Commission filings, that Musk had funneled at least $276 million into Republican groups since July alone; the Guardian and Common Dreams carried the same filings on October 12 and 13, putting his total midterm giv-

... Continued on Page F120

Nine agents who probed Trump's classified documents case are fired by his FBI, no cause cited.

BY MITCH
Investigations

Nine names, one case file, and a lawsuit that reads like a document built to answer a single question: why. That is the complaint nine former FBI agents filed this week over their own firings, and answering that question is apparently the hardest part.

All nine worked the investigation into classified documents found at the president's Florida estate. All together now — that is the only fact they share on paper: one case, nine names, nine firings. The complaint does not describe nine separate disputes. It describes one case file walking out the door nine times.

The complaint says what the agency did not say. What the complaint alleges instead is a dismissal tied to the work itself: the investigation, and the fact of having worked on it.

That is not an isolated personnel decision. Nine of those removals now carry a docket number, and a request that a judge read whatever file the agency produces and decide whether it amounts to cause.

The president has called those investigations "political witch hunts," pub-

... Continued on Page B41

Trump calls Ukraine's strikes on the Russian refineries he just legalized buying from "a disgrace."

BY THE LODGERS
The Euro Desk

Today we are making an energy ceasefire, not a dish you get over here, so I shall go slowly. You will need two countries that agreed to nothing, an American president who announced it for them anyway, and a word only one side at this table has used.

On 9 October Washington signed with Moscow to bring Russian diesel into American pumps; the sanctions that kept it out came off to make room. That took one signature, nothing more — pick it up, turn it over, it's still an oil deal. A week later a ceasefire on the refineries was added on top, and neither side said it had agreed to it.

Clive *A word only one side uses. I've called the thing in the shed a masterpiece since March; no one else will say it.*

On 10 October, ink still wet, the president said it was time for Ukraine to get a new president. The same day Russia struck Ukraine, which Zelenskyy called "thanks" for the diesel deal; he said the money from it would intensify the war, and accused Washington of helping fund it.

Gary *Masterpiece. Our boiler's said nothing since March and I'd trust it over*

... Continued on Page A214

Federal officials disband election-threat unit, then investigate powdery letters sent to election offices

BY LOU
One More Question

There's a sentence in this report I'd like to say something nice about, if I can get there without tripping over the next one. The Guardian published it October 1st. It says, in plain language, that the current administration has abandoned key security bodies meant to investigate direct threats to U.S. elections from foreign actors and domestic terrorists. That's a complete sentence. Subject, verb, object, no hedging. You don't see government writing that clean very often, and I mean that the way it sounds.

Here's the number that gets in the way of admiring it any further: zero. "Abandoned" is the word on the page, past tense, no asterisk next to it, but past tense covering what exactly? I read it twice to make sure I hadn't skimmed past a date and just missed it. I hadn't.

I've got a lock on my garage somebody installed for free a few years back, after a run of break-ins down the block. Lock goes in, the trouble stops, and after a while you forget there was ever a reason for it — it's just there, doing a job you don't think about, until the morning you notice it's gone and you can't put your finger on when it left. Was it there in June? You'd have to ask

... Continued on Page A214

White House spokeswoman defends calling herself a lawyer she failed to become.

BY CHIP
Staff Writer

Give the administration credit for speed. On October 9th, the president picked Katie Zacharia — a conservative commentator and communications adviser to his own media company — to replace Karoline Leavitt, who left the podium in August after having her second child. He called her a "devoted fan." Call it the fastest promotion in that building: a boss rewarding loyalty with the keys to the briefing room.

Four days later, on October 13th, she used them. Her first briefing ran under fifteen minutes — three questions, all from Fox News, the Daily Mail and Breitbart, and then it ended. Call the brevity discipline, fewer words and fewer chances to misspeak — watching her halt her way through her own prepared remarks, struggling just to get through the page, it wasn't discipline at all.

"When I moved to China," she said — an unusual credential for a White House spokeswoman, but loyalty counts for more than paperwork in this building. Nobody asked what happened after the move. Keeping options open.

... Continued on Page A214

Donors gave $330 million for the ballroom; among them a pardon recipient, contractors, and one closed federal investigation.

BY STERLING
The Ownership Desk

Twenty-five million dollars, handed over, purchases nothing whatever, and that is the handsome part of it. Apple gave twenty-five million to the ballroom. Nvidia gave twenty-five million and requested anonymity — requested, mind you, and did not keep it. The Adelson Family Foundation, twenty-five. Charles Ergen, co-founder and chairman of Dish Network, twenty-five. Fifty-seven names, each committed to a hundred thousand at the least, and the list runs past three hundred and thirty million dollars. Three hundred and thirty. A gift is a transfer without consideration — consideration being whatever comes back the other way — so by its own construction this money bought nothing at all. And what did Big Tech suppose it was doing? One government watchdog says those companies "bankrolled it fully expecting a return on their investment." Further down the same list, among names not published before, sit donors who have had a presidential pardon, government contracts, and at least one federal investigation closed. Most of the money arrived before the East Wing came down. The work proceeds, for now, after a ruling of the Supreme Court in August ... and the house is yours. The list is

... Continued on Page F120

Cornell bans frat parties, adds investigators, then faces a no-confidence vote over the same case.

BY MITCH
Investigations

On October 3, Cornell's own campus police logged a drug arrest at a fraternity house twenty-two hours before a former student says she was drugged and raped in that same house. On October 6, Cornell's trustees named Sally Yates, once the Justice Department's second-ranking official, to review how the university handles sexual misconduct complaints.

Wednesday, the venue changed again. Cornell's faculty senate convened, NBC News reports, to discuss whether it still has confidence in President Michael Kotlikoff over his handling of the alleged 2024 assault. All together now: the senate asked the questions, and Kotlikoff answered them — a defense of his own response, ABC reports, not an account of the allegation itself. NBC obtained audio of the exchange. CBS obtained video of it. The university's press office appears in neither byline.

Scrutiny. Sharp questions. A faculty senate — the body with the least formal power on most campuses — produced the two recordings that made it to television this week.

Students didn't wait for the senate to finish before grading the university's

... Continued on Page A214

> "Nothing up there is a conspiracy. That's the part that should worry you — it's all on the record, filed, stamped, and in a couple of cases notarized."
>
> — *Sal*

> "Nothing here is a scandal. A scandal requires surprise, and I can assure you nobody involved was surprised."
>
> — *Chip*

The hens, a man counts in spring. The fox counted in winter.

ENOCH · THE OWNERSHIP DESK

THE MONEY LEDGER

Talarico outraises Paxton three to one; Musk closes the gap with a $158 million check.

By RUTH
THE MONEY DESK



"Elon Musk becomes biggest donor of US midterms cycle with $366m spent", 13 October 2026 (PHOTO VIA THE GUARDIAN — THE ORIGINAL REPORT)

■ THE SHORT VERSION
typed by Dot

WHAT HAPPENED. James Talarico raised $64 million in small donations while Elon Musk gave $158 million to back Ken Paxton's Senate campaign.

WHO GETS PAID. Ken Paxton's Senate campaign gets a $158 million lifeline from the political group Musk funded.

WHAT SLIPS. Voters' say in the race slips as one billionaire's single check outweighs tens of thousands of small donors.

WHAT'S NEXT. The next event the receipts point to is the Texas Senate race itself, where voters decide whether Musk's $158 million check outweighs Talarico's small-donor total; no later filing date is in these reports.

AS IT RAN ON THE FRONT

Ken Paxton's side of the ledger read $18 million, a third of that. No adjective is required to see the gap.

This week the ledger added a line. Politico reported that Talarico alone outraised ten of the top Republican Senate candidates in the country, combined, over the same three months Paxton was being outraised three to one in his own race....

...(cont) Then came the correction. The New York Times reported the same week that Elon Musk, the world's richest person, gave $158 million to a political group that spent that sum helping Paxton's Senate bid. CBS News, reporting the same donation, put the gift at over $150 million. Either figure is one check, from one donor, for roughly nine times what Paxton's own campaign had raised all quarter.

The check has a history. The New York Times calculated, using Federal Election Commission filings, that Musk had funneled at least $276 million into Republican groups since July alone; the Guardian and Common Dreams carried the same filings on October 12 and 13, putting his total midterm giving at $366 million — "some of the most rapid political spending in US history," in the Guardian's words. The Times, reporting the Paxton donation, named him the cycle's biggest known midterm donor. He earned the title in the same week his candidate in Texas was being outraised by strangers mailing in hundred-dollar checks.

The pattern was filed before the check cleared. Different state, same arithmetic: large sums from concentrated sources, spent trying to close a gap that small checks, spread wide, keep reopening.

So the quarter's accounting now runs in full. Talarico's $64 million came from the public, a hundred dollars at a time. Paxton's $18 million came from his own effort. The $158 million behind it came from neither — it came from one man, filed the same week Politico ran the headline about Senate Republicans getting smoked. Whose column gaps like that turn up in is not a mystery, hon. It is a filing.

"Ninety-seven cents on the dollar from people writing hundred-dollar checks, and one guy erases that whole effort with a single wire transfer bigger than Paxton's entire campaign. That's not a donation, that's a receipt for who gets to own the seat before anybody in Texas votes."

— Sal

"Musk's just exercising his right to participate in the political process, same as any small donor, except his one check happens to be nine times what the actual candidate raised on his own — which, now that I hear it out loud, doesn't sound like "participating," it sounds like buying. Did I say that? That's not what I meant to say."

— Chip

EARLIER IN THIS STORY

— *Rumor that Talarico died collapses in hours; his record $64 million quarter doesn't.* By Ruth · the morning edition, 15 October 2026

THE RECEIPTS

How much money has Musk given to Republican groups since July? The quiz knows

NPR MAINSTREAM § *05:00 EDT*

Plus, this week saw comings and goings at the White House, the revenge of a child (reality) star, and Elon Musk doing Elon Musk things.

~~Musk donates over $150 million to Senate GOP group, assisting Paxton~~

Musk's $150 million could cover school supplies for 167,000 teachers who pay out of pocket

CBS News MAINSTREAM § *21:22 EDT*

Billionaire Elon Musk is offering a nine-figure assist to Texas GOP Senate candidate Ken Paxton, a decisive return to large-scale political giving for the world's richest man.

~~Elon Musk becomes biggest donor of US midterms cycle with $366m spent~~

$366m buys a year of classroom supplies for 409,000 teachers.

The Guardian MAINSTREAM § *13:13 EDT*

Musk's midterm donations, mostly for rightwing candidates and causes, surpass his contributions to Trump in 2024 Send us your questions on how the US economy is shaping the midterm elections Elon Musk has become the biggest political donor of the 2026 US midterm elections cycle, funneling about $366m into political groups and campaigns...

~~Senate Republicans are getting smoked in fundraising~~

James Talarico alone outraised ten top GOP Senate candidates - combined

Politico MAINSTREAM § *00:37 EDT*

James Talarico alone outraised ten of the top GOP Senate candidates combined over the past three months

~~Elon Musk's 'Absolutely Insane' $276 Million Midterm Spending Exposed in New Report~~

Musk gave $366 million to the GOP — enough to cover a year of supplies for 400,000 teachers

Common Dreams § *12:57 EDT*

Far-right billionaire Elon Musk is spending an unprecedented fortune helping the Republican Party maintain its majorities in Congress, according to a Monday report in The New York Times. The Times used filings made with the Federal Election Commission (FEC) to calculate that Musk has funneled at least $276 million to GOP groups and his...

Elon Musk Spends Heavily to Back Ken Paxton's Senate Bid in Texas

The New York Times MAINSTREAM § *00:51 EDT*

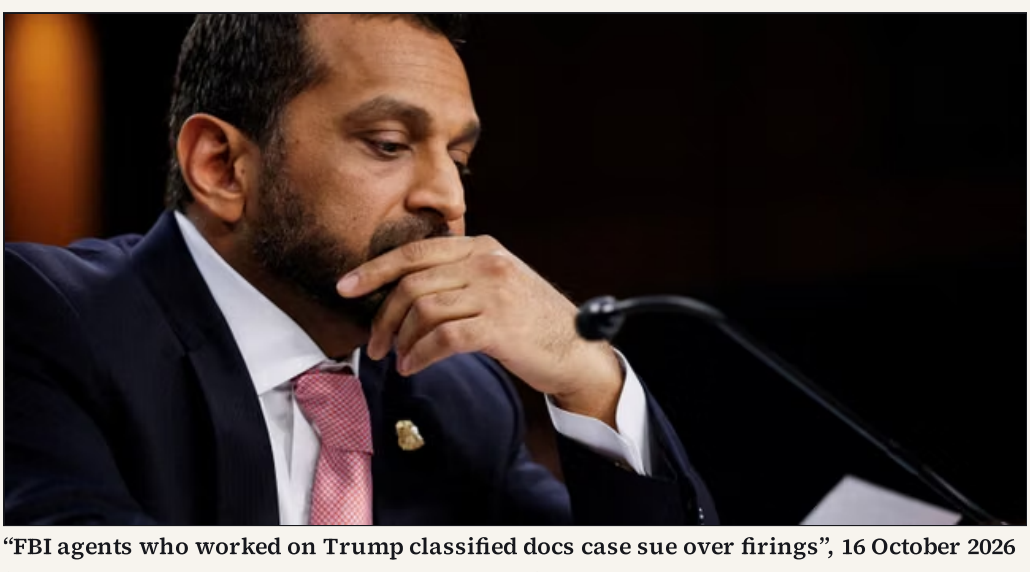
The world's richest person, who has become the biggest known midterm donor, gave $158 million to a group that quickly spent that much to help Mr. Paxton's Senate bid in Texas.

· Jeffries says Republicans are mismanaging their money in New York House races *from the morgue, 8 Oct 2026*

This page is a back-issue: the story as it ran, receipts as they were. The current edition is at the front. The byline is a pen name for a column drafted by a machine and checked by the editor: how this is made.

Nine agents who probed Trump's classified documents case are fired by his FBI, no cause cited.

By MITCH
INVESTIGATIONS



“FBI agents who worked on Trump classified docs case sue over firings”, 16 October 2026
(PHOTO VIA LE MONDE — THE ORIGINAL REPORT)

■ THE SHORT VERSION
typed by Dot

WHAT HAPPENED. Nine former FBI agents who investigated Trump's classified documents sued the FBI over their firings.

WHO GETS PAID. The administration gains an FBI cleared of the agents who built the case against the president.

WHAT SLIPS. The shield that is supposed to stop federal investigators from being fired for the cases they work slips here.

WHAT'S NEXT. The case moves next to a judge, who will decide whether firings with no stated cause can stand; no hearing date appears in the record yet.

AS IT RAN ON THE FRONT

Nine names, one case file, and a lawsuit that reads like a document built to answer a single question: why. That is the complaint nine former FBI agents filed this week over their own firings, and answering that question is apparently the hardest part.

All nine worked the investigation into classified documents found at the president's Florida estate. All together now — that is the only fact they share on paper: one case, nine names, nine firings. The complaint does not describe nine separate disputes. It describes one case file walking out the door nine times....

...(cont) The complaint says what the agency did not say. What the complaint alleges instead is a dismissal tied to the work itself: the investigation, and the fact of having worked on it.

That is not an isolated personnel decision. Nine of those removals now carry a docket number, and a request that a judge read whatever file the agency produces and decide whether it amounts to cause.

The president has called those investigations "political witch hunts," publicly, repeatedly, on the record. That characterization exists in the world. It does not, according to anything the nine plaintiffs have produced, exist on a termination notice. The complaint's claim is narrower, and for that reason harder to wave off: not that the agency gave a bad reason, but that it gave none.

Nine plaintiffs, one shared case file, and a blank line where a reason should be. The lawsuit asks a court to read that blank line as the point. That is the complaint, clause by clause, paragraph by paragraph, and now it is a court's to answer.

“Nine people worked the case against a sitting president and got fired with no misconduct on the page, no explanation, nothing — just gone, nine times, same case file. That's not downsizing, that's a message to anyone left in that building: work the wrong case and the box marked "reason" stays empty. The guy at the end of the bar doesn't work there, but he better hope somebody still does the job without looking over their shoulder first.”

— Sal

“Look, personnel decisions at a law enforcement agency are routine, happens every administration, nothing to see here — and if nine of them happen to be the nine agents who built the documents case, well, that's — okay, that does sound like something. But nobody put "witch hunt" on any termination letter, so legally speaking there's no there there. Did I just argue that the absence of a reason is the defense? That doesn't sound like me.”

— Chip

THE RECEIPTS

~~FBI agents who worked on Trump classified docs case sue over firings~~

Trump's administration fired the agents who investigated him. Now they're suing.

Le Monde MAINSTREAM § *23:36 EDT*

Since returning to the White House in January 2025, Trump's administration has fired dozens of FBI and other law enforcement personnel associated with the investigations, which the president has denounced as 'political witch hunts.'

~~9 former FBI agents who worked on Trump classified docs case sue over their firings~~

Agents who worked Trump's documents case say they were fired for it

ABC News MAINSTREAM § *21:09 EDT*

Nine former FBI agents who worked on President Trump's classified documents case have filed suit alleging that they were unlawfully fired over their role in the probe.

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Trump calls Ukraine's strikes on the Russian refineries he just legalized buying from "a disgrace."

By THE LODGERS
THE EURO DESK

"Trump announces deal for Russian diesel as Zelensky calls it a gift to Putin", 10 October 2026 (PHOTO VIA BBC NEWS — THE ORIGINAL REPORT)

■ THE SHORT VERSION
typed by Dot

WHAT HAPPENED. Trump lifted sanctions so Russian diesel could reach American buyers, then told Ukraine to replace its president for objecting.

WHO GETS PAID. Russian oil refiners, now selling diesel to American buyers the sanctions used to keep out.

WHAT SLIPS. Who leads Ukraine is now something an outside power publicly demands, a choice that belongs to Ukraine's own voters.

WHAT'S NEXT. Ukraine says it will keep striking the refineries until the ceasefire is real, and it is now leaning on European allies rather than Washington for support.

AS IT RAN ON THE FRONT

Today we are making an energy ceasefire, not a dish you get over here, so I shall go slowly. You will need two countries that agreed to nothing, an American president who announced it for them anyway, and a word only one side at this table has used.

On 9 October Washington signed with Moscow to bring Russian diesel into American pumps; the sanctions that kept it out came off to make room. That took one signature, nothing more — pick it up, turn it over, it's still an oil deal. A week later a ceasefire on the refineries was added on top, and neither side said it had agreed to it....

Clive *A word only one side uses. I've called the thing in the shed a masterpiece since March; no one else will say it.*

On 10 October, ink still wet, the president said it was time for Ukraine to get a new president. The same day Russia struck Ukraine, which Zelenskyy called "thanks" for the diesel deal; he said the money from it would intensify the war, and accused Washington of helping fund it.

Gary *Masterpiece. Our boiler's said nothing since March and I'd trust it over the shed.*

By 12 October Kyiv's allies, inside the president's circle, were rallying behind Zelenskyy against the deal and threats to cut off weapons and intelligence. Zelenskyy called the president "weak" for dealing with Russia.

Keith *Weak sells. I could stitch it on something by Thursday — same as nearly happened to your boiler.*

By 16 October the ceasefire was finished. Ukraine resumed its strikes on the Russian refineries after Zelenskyy said Moscow was not observing the truce, and the president called the renewed strikes "a disgrace," calling Zelenskyy "more difficult to deal with than Putin."

On Newsmax, host Rob Finnerty asked him; he said: "I'm not a big fan of Zelensky. They've destroyed that country." The New York Times called it a deal inflaming the war it was meant to end.

Rob *Destroyed. Always going to end like this — same as your boiler scheme, Keith; nobody's thanked me for the damp.*

Here is the mishap: before any of this, pro-Russian accounts claimed a Russian tanker was already carrying diesel to American shores under the new deal. France 24 checked; it was carrying fertiliser.

Clive *Carrying it this far — that's a stanza, Rob. Finished by Friday, shed permitting.*

The Guardian, what they have here, prints it as the "energy ceasefire" — its own quotation marks — and says neither Russia nor Ukraine agreed to it. The New York Times at home drops the quotes and calls it simply a deal.

You will be looking for the two signatures that make a ceasefire a ceasefire. There are none; the quotation marks are standing in for them.

This serves the Russian refiners, paid in dollars now the sanctions are off. Ukraine pays in allies, rallying Europe's since Washington stopped being reliable.

Rob *Allies. Four of us in this house and none's paid the gas since March; the Europeans still answer the phone.*

❦ FROM THE CORNER ❦
Dutch

Washington lifted sanctions so Russian diesel could reach American buyers, then told Ukraine to get a new president for still hitting the refineries that make it. That isn't a ceasefire, it's a non-compete clause for Russian refineries, and Ukraine's the one billed for breaking it. Each refinery Kyiv leaves standing keeps a barrel moving toward a buyer here, each barrel sold keeps a truck loaded, and when Kyiv hits them again anyway, it's the diesel truck idling outside your house on Tuesday that gets turned around.

"He lifted the sanctions so Russian diesel could reach American pumps, then told Ukraine to get a new president for still hitting the refineries making it. Now those same strikes are "a disgrace" and Zelensky's harder to deal with than Putin — from the guy who signed the deal. Diesel runs every truck in this country, and so does whoever decides which war is allowed to interrupt the shipment."

— Sal

"The President's ending a war nobody else could — you buy a little Russian diesel, you get leverage at the table, that's just how deals work. Sure, he also told Ukraine to get a new president for hitting the refineries we just agreed to buy from, but him calling the strikes "a disgrace" shows he still cares about the ceasefire — the one nobody actually signed. Did I say nobody signed it? Forget I said that."

— Chip

EARLIER IN THIS STORY

— *Trump's Russian diesel deal paused the war five days, longer than any Senate hopeful will defend it.* By Chip · the morning edition, 15 October 2026
— *Deal meant to cut pump prices promotes refineries from liabilities to goldmines* By Ruth · the morning edition, 14 October 2026
— *Trump's Russian diesel deal ruled too small, too late for the midterms, by his own party's newspaper.* By Ruth · the evening edition, 13 October 2026
— *DOJ tells judge who called it 'beyond the pale' that nearly 300 more trees are already marked.* By Mort · the evening edition, 12 October 2026
— *Six strikes into his energy ceasefire, Trump buys Russian diesel anyway and calls it the right choice.* By Ruth · the evening edition, 12 October 2026
— *Trump declares immediate energy ceasefire, Russia hits Ukraine's power plants within hours.* By Ruth · the afternoon edition, 12 October 2026

THE RECEIPTS

~~Trump announces deal for Russian diesel as Zelensky calls it a gift to Putin~~

Diesel prices doubled since the Iran war began. Now Trump wants Putin to fix it.
BBC News | MAINSTREAM | 10:24 EDT

Ukraine's president sharply criticised the move, calling it an "investment in war that must be ended, not prolonged".

But: Trump promised to settle the Ukraine war with Putin within 24 hours - on 53 separate occasions *CNN fact check, 25 April 2025 (all 53 instances)*

Trump says Russia will release millions of tons of diesel to help with costs
CBS News | MAINSTREAM | 12:08 EDT

Russian President Vladimir Putin agreed to release 300,000 tons of diesel immediately and millions more over the coming months.

But: Trump promised 'within 24 hours, that war will be settled' - CNN counted 53 separate such promises *CNN fact check, 25 April 2025 (all 53 instances)*

Trump says he's 'not a big fan' of Zelensky after new strikes on Russian oil refineries
Washington Examiner | RIGHT | 22:40 EDT

President Donald Trump expressed his personal distaste for Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky on Thursday after Ukraine launched new strikes on Russian oil refineries. "I'm not a big fan of Zelensky," Trump told Newsmax host Rob Finnerty in an exclusive interview.

But: Trump promised he'd meet Putin and Zelensky and settle the war within 24 hours — 53 separate times, CNN counted *CNN fact check, 25 April 2025 (all 53 instances)*

Trump and Putin sign diesel deal, angering Ukraine and its allies
Le Monde | MAINSTREAM | 05:38 EDT

The US president announced Friday that Russia has committed to supplying nearly 5 million tons of diesel fuel to the United States and global markets 'within a short period of time.' The deal has sparked outrage across Europe.

But: Trump promised 53 times he'd end the war within 24 hours *CNN fact check, 25 April 2025 (all 53 instances)*

Trump says Ukraine needs new president, blames Zelenskyy for diesel prices
CBS News | MAINSTREAM | 21:59 EDT

President Trump's criticism of Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy comes after Russian strikes killed at least 20 people, including three children, in Ukraine.

But: Trump promised to settle the war within 24 hours - on 53 separate occasions, CNN counted *CNN fact check, 25 April 2025 (all 53 instances)*

Trump rips into Volodymyr Zelensky — insisting it's time for Ukraine to 'get a new president'
New York Post | RIGHT | 16:56 EDT

President Trump ripped into Volodymyr Zelensky on Saturday telling reporters outside the White House that it's time for Ukraine to "get a new president."

But: Trump promised to settle the war within 24 hours - on 53 separate occasions, CNN counted *CNN fact check, 25 April 2025 (all 53 instances)*

'Time for Ukraine to get new president,' says Trump after Zelensky condemns diesel deal
BBC News | MAINSTREAM | 21:41 EDT

Ukraine's leader had said the deal with Russia to release diesel into the US would help Moscow fund the war.

But: 'I'll meet with Putin. I'll meet with Zelensky... And within 24 hours, that war will be settled' - Trump, CNN town hall, 10 May 2023. CNN counted 53 separate occasions he promised it. *CNN fact check, 25 April 2025 (all 53 instances)*

Trump calls for Ukraine to replace Zelenskyy after clash over Russia diesel deal: 'Get a new president'
Fox News | RIGHT | 15:54 EDT

President Donald Trump demanded Volodymyr Zelenskyy stop striking Russian oil refineries, warning the attacks worsen global diesel and fuel supplies.

~~No, this oil tanker didn't carry Russian diesel to the United States~~

Trump's deal to import Russian diesel is real - the tanker photo isn't.
France 24 | MAINSTREAM | 04:36 EDT

Following US President Donald Trump's October 9 announcement of an agreement signed with Russian President Vladimir Putin to import Russian diesel into the United States, a number of pro-Russian social media accounts began claiming that a Russian oil tanker was already carrying thousands of barrels of diesel to the United States. The...

~~Zelenskyy furious as Trump announces deal to buy Russian diesel~~

Trump funds Russia's war - the one he vowed to end in 24 hours, 53 times
The Guardian | MAINSTREAM | 06:09 EDT

US president says agreement needed to lower fuel prices, but move likely to create fresh crisis with Ukraine and Nato allies Donald Trump is on a fresh collision course with Volodymyr Zelenskyy and European allies after his stunning agreement to buy Russian diesel upended years of US and western pressure on the Kremlin to end its war...

~~Trump's Deal With Russia Inflames Ukraine War He Vowed to End~~

Trump has promised to end the war in 24 hours. He's said it 53 times.
The New York Times | MAINSTREAM | 21:02 EDT

The Ukrainian president's defiant decision to continue attacking Russian refineries underscores President Trump's inability to end a war he had promised to resolve.

But: Trump promised to settle the war within 24 hours - on 53 separate occasions, CNN counted *CNN fact check, 25 April 2025 (all 53 instances)*

Trump says Ukraine needs 'a new leader who can make a deal'
Washington Examiner | RIGHT | 13:38 EDT

President Donald Trump on Saturday called for new leadership in Ukraine, marking a dramatic shift in the United States's relationship with Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky. Trump has long pushed Russia and Ukraine to make a deal ending the war between the countries, which has now stretched over four-and-a-half years and appeared to...

~~Trump rips Zelensky amid Russia diesel deal feud: 'I suggest they get a new leader'~~

The White House lifted sanctions on Russian diesel. Then it blamed Zelensky for the war.
The Hill | MAINSTREAM | 14:26 EDT

President Trump on Saturday pushed back on criticism from Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky to the White House's decision to lift sanctions on Russian diesel amid the Russia-Ukraine war. The president told reporters outside the White House that Zelensky "could have settled this war many times," but "chose not to."

~~Zelensky unleashes on Trump as Russia diesel deal rallies Ukraine's supporters~~

Trump struck a diesel deal with Russia and threatened to cut Ukraine's weapons
The Hill | MAINSTREAM | 15:09 EDT

Kyiv's allies, including those in President Trump's circle, are rallying around Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky, pushing back against Trump's diesel deal with Russia and threats to cut off weapons and intelligence sharing to Ukraine. Zelensky, buoyed by the support, has unleashed criticism against Trump, calling the president...

But: Trump promised he'd settle the Ukraine war within 24 hours of talking to Putin and Zelenskyy - he's said some version of that 53 separate times *CNN fact check, 25 April 2025 (all 53 instances)*

Trump says Ukraine needs a new leader after diesel deal with Russia
The Guardian | MAINSTREAM | 16:42 EDT

US president suggests Ukrainian president, Volodymyr Zelenskyy, has not done enough to end war Donald Trump has said Ukraine needs "a new leader", a day after making a deal with Vladimir Putin to buy large quantities of Russian diesel. The US president suggested Volodymyr Zelenskyy has not done enough to end the war with Russia and...

But: Trump promised to settle the war within 24 hours - CNN counted 53 separate occasions he made that promise *CNN fact check, 25 April 2025 (all 53 instances)*

Rebuking Ukraine Over Oil Strikes, Trump Says It Should 'Get a New President'
The New York Times | MAINSTREAM | 15:28 EDT

Hours after President Trump said the United States would buy Russian diesel, the Kremlin said there would be no immediate resumption of discussions to end the war.

But: Trump promised to end the war within 24 hours — on 53 separate occasions *CNN fact check, 25 April 2025 (all 53 instances)*

Zelenskyy rallies European allies as Trump ties slump
Le Monde | MAINSTREAM | 01:41 EDT

Zelensky said Ukraine was no longer pausing strikes on Russian refineries as Moscow was not abiding by a ceasefire on hitting energy infrastructure that had been announced by the US president.

~~Trump calls Ukraine's renewed strikes on Russian oil refineries a 'disgrace'~~

Trump blames Ukraine for collapse of a ceasefire neither side ever agreed to
The Guardian | MAINSTREAM | 05:05 EDT

US president says Zelenskyy 'more difficult to deal with than Putin' after 'energy ceasefire' collapses Europe live – latest updates Donald Trump has called Ukraine's renewed strikes on Russian oil refineries a "disgrace", while renewing his criticism of Volodymyr Zelenskyy after an energy ceasefire between Russia and Ukraine...

· Trump: Russia has 'lost control' of its diesel industry as prices soar *from the morgue, 21 Sep 2026*

· Trump says Ukraine and Russia have agreed to energy target ceasefire *from the morgue, 14 Sep 2026*

· Trump calls on Ukraine to halt strikes on Russian diesel fuel *from the morgue, 14 Sep 2026*

· Trump blames Ukraine for diesel fuel price spike, urges Zelensky to stop hitting Russian refineries *from the morgue, 13 Sep 2026*

· Trump calls out Zelensky over rising diesel prices *from the morgue, 15 Sep 2026*

· Ukraine persists with Russian oil refinery strikes, defying Trump on fuel price warnings *from the morgue, 1 Oct 2026*

· Britain in talks with European allies over release of emergency diesel stockpiles amid Trump pressure *from the morgue, 1 Oct 2026*

· Russia's Lavrov blasts US, Western allies as "warmongers' in fiery UN tirade *from the morgue, 26 Sep 2026*

· Russia and China unite against US over Iran and Cuba in UN speeches *from the morgue, 26 Sep 2026*

· U.S. military lays groundwork for potential action around Cuba *from the morgue, 26 Sep 2026*

· The United Nations Security Council has resoundingly rejected a United States bid to extend a global arms embargo on Iran. In a Security Council vote, United States only got support from the Dominican *from the morgue, 14 Aug 2020*

· U.S. Threatens New Economic War on Iran by Targeting China & Tehran's Other Top Trading Partners *from the morgue, 25 Aug 2026*

· In Defiant UN Speech, Iranian President Says US and Israel Are the Real Terrorists *from the morgue, 23 Sep 2026*

· Trump slams reporting on removal of his endorsements from GOP candidate's website *from the morgue, 27 Sep 2026*

· Donalds removes several Trump mentions from campaign website *from the morgue, 22 Sep 2026*

· GOP hopeful removes 'Pro-Trump' mention from campaign slogan in deep-red seat *from the morgue, 23 Sep 2026*

· Where Trump's 2026 endorsement record stands after primary season *from the morgue, 9 Sep 2026*

· U.N. experts say U.S. may have committed war crimes with 2 Iran strikes *from the morgue, 22 Sep 2026*

· Trump Says 'Big Decision' Coming on Whether to 'Annihilate' Iran *from the morgue, 18 Sep 2026*

· Pentagon No. 3 frustrates senators in closed-door briefing on Iran war, Trump defense strategy *from the morgue, 17 Sep 2026*

· Senate Democrats, minus Fetterman, urge Hegseth to provide receipt for Iran war costs *from the morgue, 17 Sep 2026*

· Hegseth on "devastation" to Iran's capabilities *from the morgue, 10 Sep 2026*

· Trump admits Iran war will not end before midterms *from the morgue, 9 Sep 2026*

· Iran War Trump Said Would Be Quick Has Now Lasted 6 Months With 'No End In Sight' *from the morgue, 28 Aug 2026*

· CBO Finds Trump's Iran War Has Already Cost Nearly $40 Billion—And That's a 'Conservative' Estimate *from the morgue, 15 Sep 2026*

· Tillis supports Hegseth impeachment resolution: 'He needs to go' *from the morgue, 18 Sep 2026*

· Massie Files Impeachment Articles Against Hegseth for Illegal Iran War, Boat Murders *from the morgue, 15 Sep 2026*

· Massie launches effort to impeach Hegseth *from the morgue, 15 Sep 2026*

· Tillis urges Trump to fire Hegseth over 'inept management' of military *from the morgue, 2 Sep 2026*

· Tillis renews calls for Hegseth's firing after Driscoll's departure: 'I have never witnessed more inept management' *from the morgue, 2 Sep 2026*

· Farmer who voted for Trump says farmers are "all just in survival mode" *from the morgue, 18 Sep 2026*

· Farmer who voted for Trump says "I can't stay in business" amid rising costs *from the morgue, 18 Sep 2026*

· Massie says he's convinced enough Republicans to pass Epstein Files II discharge petition *from the morgue, 18 Sep 2026*

· Massie names Epstein 'coconspirators,' discusses new Epstein files legislation *from the morgue, 1 Sep 2026*

· Read Thomas Massie's eight impeachment charges against Pete Hegseth *from the morgue, 15 Sep 2026*

· Fake Republican midterm convention site still redirects to Epstein files *from the morgue, 7 Sep 2026*

· Trump says he has a 'big decision' coming up on Iran: 'Do I want to go in and annihilate them' *from the morgue, 17 Sep 2026*

· Fox News Poll: 71% think Trump administration lacks plan to end Iran war *from the morgue, 17 Sep 2026*

· Iran recently downed at least 2 American drones, officials say *from the morgue, 17 Sep 2026*

· Big Oil Stocks Surged Due to Iran War—and New Filings Show How President Trump Cashed In *from the morgue, 27 Aug 2026*

· Live updates: Energy secretary downplays rising gas prices as US, Iran trade strikes *from the morgue, 6 Sep 2026*

· U.S. Strike on Iranian School May Have Been War Crime, U.N. Report Says *from the morgue, 17 Sep 2026*

· UN Inquiry Finds US Strike on Minab, Iran That Killed 123 Children Was War Crime *from the morgue, 17 Sep 2026*

· UN investigators conclude 'reasonable grounds' to believe certain US strikes in Iran were war crimes *from the morgue, 17 Sep 2026*

· UN Suspects US War Crimes in Iran *from the morgue, 17 Sep 2026*

· US Condemned for 'War Crimes' After Bombing of Wedding Party in Iran *from the morgue, 2 Sep 2026*

· US investigating if missile hit Iranian wedding ceremony, killing 4 *from the morgue, 4 Sep 2026*

· Trump says he has a 'big decision coming up' on Iran *from the morgue, 17 Sep 2026*

· White House issues explosive response to UN-backed report claiming US committed war crimes against world's No.1 sponsor of terror, Iran *from the morgue, 17 Sep 2026*

· Human rights experts: 'Reasonable grounds' to believe US committed war crimes with Iran strikes *from the morgue, 17 Sep 2026*

· US Energy Consumers Have Spent $121 Billion Extra Since Trump Launched Iran War: Moody's *from the morgue, 17 Sep 2026*

· Iran downed at least 2 American drones in recent days, U.S. officials say *from the morgue, 17 Sep 2026*

· Iran: Account of US Air Force colonel's rescue 'fictional' *from the morgue, 17 Sep 2026*

· Consumer Burden of Trump Iran War Exceeds $100 Billion as Oil Prices Pass $100 a Barrel *from the morgue, 9 Sep 2026*

· 'A Serious and Alarming Threat': US Bombing, Blockade Deepen Iran Medical Crisis *from the morgue, 9 Sep 2026*

· Consumer Confidence Hits Lowest Level in Months as US Faces 'Trump's Reckless Tariffs and War With Iran' *from the morgue, 25 Aug 2026*

· U.S. Air Force officer rescued from Iran speaks for the first time to 60 Minutes *from the morgue, 8 Sep 2026*

· Rep. Thomas Massie forcing vote on Pete Hegseth's impeachment *from the morgue, 16 Sep 2026*

· Did Johnson Just Adjourn Congress for 7 Weeks to Avoid Massie's Impeachment Articles Against Hegseth? *from the morgue, 16 Sep 2026*

· The Hitchhiker's Guide to Massie saying Johnson is sending the House home early to prevent Hegseth impeachment *from the morgue, 16 Sep 2026*

· 'You're Elected to Fight and Kill the Other Side': How Congress Lost Its Way *from the morgue, 16 Sep 2026*

· Army combat veteran challenging Mike Lawler calls Hegseth national security 'hazard,' backs impeachment *from the morgue, 6 Sep 2026*

· Former Air Force secretary says he 'couldn't serve' in Trump administration *from the morgue, 6 Sep 2026*

· Former Air Force secretary: Hegseth's Pentagon 'dysfunctional' *from the morgue, 3 Sep 2026*

· House Republicans split over leaving Washington early for campaign trail *from the morgue, 1 Sep 2026*

· Since 2025, Trump Made More Stock Trades Than All 535 Congress Members Combined *from the morgue, 16 Sep 2026*

· Fossil Fuel Advertising Contracts Hit Record High as Big Oil Pockets Billions From Iran War *from the morgue, 16 Sep 2026*

· 'How are we gonna get through this?' Many Americans are struggling as prices rise *from the morgue, 16 Sep 2026*

This page is a back-issue: the story as it ran, receipts as they were. The current edition is at the front. The byline is a pen name for a column drafted by a machine and checked by the editor: how this is made.

Federal officials disband election-threat unit, then investigate powdery letters sent to election offices

By LOU
ONE MORE QUESTION



“FBI investigates letters with ‘unknown substance’ sent to US election officials”, 16 October 2026 (PHOTO VIA THE GUARDIAN — THE ORIGINAL REPORT)

AS IT RAN ON THE FRONT

There's a sentence in this report I'd like to say something nice about, if I can get there without tripping over the next one. The Guardian published it October 1st. It says, in plain language, that the current administration has abandoned key security bodies meant to investigate direct threats to U.S. elections from foreign actors and domestic terrorists. That's a complete sentence. Subject, verb, object, no hedging. You don't see government writing that clean very often, and I mean that the way it sounds.

Here's the number that gets in the way of admiring it any further: zero. "Abandoned" is the word on the page, past tense, no asterisk next to it, but past tense covering what exactly? I read it twice to make sure I hadn't skimmed past a date and just missed it. I hadn't....

...(cont) I've got a lock on my garage somebody installed for free a few years back, after a run of break-ins down the block. Lock goes in, the trouble stops, and after a while you forget there was ever a reason for it — it's just there, doing a job you don't think about, until the morning you notice it's gone and you can't put your finger on when it left. Was it there in June? You'd have to ask whoever took it off, and they're not the one who tells you.

What I can tell you is what moved into that space. One day after the report ran — October 2nd — Georgia's State Election Board, Republican-led, sent a letter to the Justice Department. What did it ask for? An investigation into the state's voting systems, additional security measures, a little over a month before the midterms. So the machines got a federal ask, in writing, with a date attached to it.

Two weeks after the report ran, three wire services had something new on the desk. The Guardian's version is specific: Louisiana and Oklahoma received envelopes with a powdery substance and evacuated their offices; a similar package addressed to the Ohio secretary of state was intercepted by the Postal Service before anyone opened it. The BBC confirms all three states by name — Louisiana, Oklahoma, Ohio. CBS's item is shorter: state election officials and congressional offices, unknown substances, and it doesn't name a single state. Three wire services on the same week's story. Two of them name the same three states. One of them, asked to say where, doesn't.

The FBI and the Postal Inspection Service are on the letters now, which is the right agency doing the right job, same as it would be whether or not a different body had stopped doing a related job sometime earlier this year. I'm not going to tell you those two facts are connected, because I don't have a date that lines them up, and neither, as far as I can find, does the report.

Oh — and before I let you go. That sentence I liked so much, the one with the clean subject and the clean verb? Go back and read it one more time. It doesn't say "bodies were allowed to lapse." It doesn't say "oversight lapsed." It names who did it: the administration. Not a passive sentence hiding the actor behind a semicolon — an actor, doing a verb, to an object that used to watch the mail for exactly this. The report already told you who closed it. I just think a sentence that clean is worth reading twice before you fold the page.

“They didn't lose the unit that watches for threats to election offices, they packed it up and called it a reorganization. Same week a Republican-run board in Georgia gets the Justice Department's full attention for a voting-machine probe, nobody opening an envelope full of powder gets that kind of speed. Follow the floor space: there's federal urgency for the fraud story nobody's proven, and silence for the mail room where something already landed in three states.”

— Sal

“Nobody closed anything, departments get streamlined, that's just good government, and if a county clerk in Louisiana opens an envelope she shouldn't have, that's a Postal Inspection Service matter, always has been — it's not like we abandoned — okay, the report does say "abandoned." That's not the word I would've used. I wouldn't have used that word.”

— Chip

THE RECEIPTS

Feds probing suspicious letters to election officials, lawmakers

CBS News MAINSTREAM § *19:21 EDT*

Federal investigators said they are looking into suspicious letters containing unknown substances that were mailed to state election officials and congressional offices.

FBI investigates letters with ‘unknown substance’ sent to US election officials

The Guardian MAINSTREAM § *21:55 EDT*

Election officers in Louisiana and Oklahoma receive a powdery substance, prompting evacuations The FBI and the US Postal Inspection Service are investigating letters sent to state officials and election offices across the country containing an “unknown substance”. Just weeks before November’s US midterm elections , election officers in...

Letters with 'suspicious substances' sent to US senators and election offices

BBC News MAINSTREAM § *18:46 EDT*

A number of states have confirmed they were targeted by the mailings, including Oklahoma, Ohio and Louisiana.

· Trump officials abandon effort to investigate election threats, experts warn *from the morgue, 1 Oct 2026*

· Alarm as GOP-Led Election Board Asks Trump Administration to Probe Georgia Voting Systems *from the morgue, 2 Oct 2026*

This page is a back-issue: the story as it ran, receipts as they were. The current edition is at the front. The byline is a pen name for a column drafted by a machine and checked by the editor: how this is made.

White House spokeswoman defends calling herself a lawyer she failed to become.

By CHIP
STAFF WRITER

"Trump's new press secretary raises eyebrows with bar exam response", 13 October 2026
(PHOTO VIA THE HILL — THE ORIGINAL REPORT)

■ **THE SHORT VERSION**
typed by Dot

WHAT HAPPENED. The White House press secretary admitted she never passed the bar exam and said future briefings are unknown.

WHO GETS PAID. Fox News, the Daily Mail and Breitbart keep the only questions the briefing room still allows.

WHAT SLIPS. The press's chance to question the White House in person slips once briefings become optional instead of routine.

WHAT'S NEXT. If briefings stop being routine, that is what the Pentagon got after March 20, 2026: reporters moved to escort-only access once the press office itself was declared classified.

AS IT RAN ON THE FRONT

Give the administration credit for speed. On October 9th, the president picked Katie Zacharia — a conservative commentator and communications adviser to his own media company — to replace Karoline Leavitt, who left the podium in August after having her second child. He called her a "devoted fan." Call it the fastest promotion in that building: a boss rewarding loyalty with the keys to the briefing room.

Four days later, on October 13th, she used them. Her first briefing ran under fifteen minutes — three questions, all from Fox News, the Daily Mail and Breitbart, and then it ended. Call the brevity discipline, fewer words and fewer chances to misspeak — watching her halt her way through her own prepared remarks, struggling just to get through the page, it wasn't discipline at all....

...(cont) "When I moved to China," she said — an unusual credential for a White House spokeswoman, but loyalty counts for more than paperwork in this building. Nobody asked what happened after the move. Keeping options open.

That same Thursday, talking to the commentator Jack Posobiec, she supplied what China had left out: she had failed the bar exam in California before she ever got there. She still calls herself a lawyer anyway. "I was very careful," she said, about the wording — careful, it turns out, is the word for choosing "lawyer" when the truth is she never passed the exam that makes one.

By the time she sat down with Sean Hannity on Fox News, she was defending both things in the same breath — the brevity of the briefing and the credential she does not hold — as though either still needed defending. The job was supposed to be about how often she faces the press. It has become about whether there is still a podium worth facing, now that nobody at it had to pass anything to stand there.

❦ FROM THE CORNER ❦

DUTCH

KATIE ZACHARIA NEVER PASSED THE BAR EXAM, TOOK THREE QUESTIONS FROM FOX News, the Daily Mail and Breitbart before ending her first briefing, and told the Guardian it is unknown whether she will take any more. That isn't a press secretary, it's a formality the job no longer requires. Because the podium does not need a license to stand behind it, the person at it does not need to answer anything to keep standing there; because she doesn't have to answer, the only questions that get taken are the ones already cleared with Fox, the Daily Mail and Breitbart; and the question you drove down to ask, the one with your name still on the sign-in sheet when the briefing ends twelve minutes early, goes home in your pocket unanswered.

"They didn't hire a lawyer, they hired a fan, and when the fan couldn't get through her own cue cards they called it discipline instead of what it was. The job used to mean standing up every day and taking it from anybody holding a camera; now it's three friendly questions and a maybe on the rest. The bar exam she skipped isn't the joke — the joke is that nobody standing at that podium has to pass anything before they decide what you get to know."

— Sal

"Look, loyalty is a qualification — the president's known this woman for years, and that counts for more than some state exam written by people who've never run a press shop a day in their lives. And the briefing length, that's efficiency, nobody wants rambling, fifteen minutes is downright generous compared to Karoline— wait, did I just compare her unfavorably to Karoline? Forget I said that. The point is she passed the only test that matters, which is loyalty, and as for the lawyer thing, it's just a word, everybody uses words loosely, I use words loosely, that doesn't mean— actually, maybe don't use that one either."

— Chip

THE RECEIPTS

~~Trump's new press secretary raises eyebrows with bar exam response~~

Trump's press secretary says she passed the bar exam after moving to China

The Hill MAINSTREAM § *13:30 EDT*

President Trump's new press secretary Katie Zacharia raised eyebrows on Tuesday when she was asked where she passed the bar exam, telling reporters that she did so when she moved to China. Zacharia made the remarks on the White House South Lawn alongside Trump before heading to Alaska with him for a campaign rally. "Where...

Katie Zacharia addresses brevity of first press briefing, defends legal credentials after criticism

Fox News RIGHT § *23:01 EDT*

Katie Zacharia defended her debut White House press briefing and addressed California bar exam scrutiny during interview with Sean Hannity.

~~Katie Zacharia Admits Failing Bar, but Defends Calling Herself a Lawyer~~

The White House press secretary failed the bar - and still calls herself a lawyer.

The New York Times MAINSTREAM § *22:17 EDT*

In an interview with a right-wing influencer, the new White House press secretary also described the harried process that led to her hiring.

New Trump press secretary says she did not pass bar exam

RTÉ MAINSTREAM § *05:21 EDT*

New White House press secretary Katie Zacharia has said she did not pass the bar exam after facing scrutiny about her legal career before becoming the top spokeswoman for US President Donald Trump.

Trump says he picked 'devoted fan' Katie Zacharia to be next press secretary

The Guardian MAINSTREAM § *17:39 EDT*

Zacharia will replace Karoline Leavitt, who left the role at the end of August after giving birth to her second child Donald Trump on Friday announced that he had picked Katie Zacharia to be the next White House press secretary, lining up a conservative commentator he called a "devoted fan" to be his most prominent spokesperson. Zacharia...

~~Trump's new press secretary says it's 'unknown' how much she'll deal with media~~

Trump's new press secretary's first briefing flopped. Now she won't say if there'll be another.

The Guardian MAINSTREAM § *18:58 EDT*

Katie Zacharia tells Guardian her first, widely panned, press briefing followed whirlwind sprint to appoint her to key role Donald Trump's new White House press secretary says it is "unknown" how much she will engage with the press or hold briefings with reporters, as she faces mounting questions over her legal credentials. In a brief...

~~Katie Zacharia offered White House press secretary post~~

Trump's new press secretary comes from his own media company

The Hill MAINSTREAM § *14:30 EDT*

President Trump has offered Katie Zacharia, a conservative commentator and communications adviser to the president's media company, the position as the next White House press secretary, a White House official confirmed to The Hill. The New York Times first reported on Friday that Zacharia would be named to the post. Zacharia would fill a...

~~'She Can Barely Read': New Trump Press Secretary Katie Zacharia Faceplants in First Briefing~~

New press secretary took questions only from Fox, Daily Mail and Breitbart before ending her first briefing

Common Dreams § *13:02 EDT*

New White House Press Secretary Katie Zacharia gave her debut press conference on Tuesday and was quickly panned by critics, including some anonymous Trump administration officials. Zacharia's first briefing, which lasted less than 15 minutes, was marked by halting speech and apparent difficulty in reading her prepared remarks. The Trump...

~~Katie Zacharia defends use of 'lawyer' title despite failing bar: 'I was very careful'~~

White House press secretary failed the bar. She still calls herself a lawyer.

Washington Examiner RIGHT § *20:21 EDT*

White House press secretary Katie Zacharia addressed newly raised questions regarding her legal credentials after claiming she is a lawyer, even though she never passed the bar exam. In an interview with conservative commentator Jack Posobiec on Thursday, Zacharia confirmed she failed the bar exam in California before moving to China....

This page is a back-issue: the story as it ran, receipts as they were. The current edition is at the front. The byline is a pen name for a column drafted by a machine and checked by the editor: how this is made.

THE DONOR LIST

Donors gave $330 million for the ballroom; among them a pardon recipient, contractors, and one closed federal investigation.

By STERLING
THE OWNERSHIP DESK



"Trump ballroom donors revealed in Washington Post report", 15 October 2026
(PHOTO VIA THE HILL — THE ORIGINAL REPORT)

■ THE SHORT VERSION
typed by Dot

WHAT HAPPENED. Apple, Nvidia and dozens of other donors paid for President Trump's White House ballroom, a newly published list shows.

WHO GETS PAID. The donors themselves: companies with business before the administration, among them Apple and Nvidia, which asked to stay unnamed.

WHAT SLIPS. The public found out who paid for work on a government building only because a newspaper obtained the list.

WHAT'S NEXT. The Supreme Court cleared the project in August, so the room gets built and the published list stands as the only public record of who paid for it.

Twenty-five million dollars, handed over, purchases nothing whatever, and that is the handsome part of it. Apple gave twenty-five million to the ballroom. Nvidia gave twenty-five million and requested anonymity — requested, mind you, and did not keep it. The Adelson Family Foundation, twenty-five. Charles Ergen, co-founder and chairman of Dish Network, twenty-five. Fifty-seven names, each committed to a hundred thousand at the least, and the list runs past three hundred and thirty million dollars. Three hundred and thirty. A gift is a transfer without consideration — consideration being whatever comes back the other way — so by its own construction this money bought nothing at all. And what did Big Tech suppose it was doing? One government watchdog says those companies "bankrolled it fully expecting a return on their investment." Further down the same list, among names not published before, sit donors who have had a presidential pardon, government contracts, and at least one federal investigation closed. Most of the money arrived before the East Wing came down. The work proceeds, for now, after a ruling of the Supreme Court in August … and the house is yours. The list is not.

❦ FROM THE CORNER ❦

DUTCH

FIFTY-SEVEN DONORS PUT MORE THAN THREE HUNDRED AND THIRTY MILLION DOLLARS into the White House ballroom, Apple and Nvidia twenty-five million each, and the published list includes donors who have had a presidential pardon, government contracts, and a federal investigation closed. That is not a building fund, that is an admission price, and the administration is working the door. Apple writes twenty-five million and becomes a known face in the room, the room is where the people who rule on Apple's business stand around, and you paid full retail for the Apple phone on your kitchen counter and got a warranty.

The lid, the neighbour lifts for
the men with carts. A man waits.

— ENOCH
The Ownership Desk

"They tell you there is no money for your kid's school, and then fifty-seven outfits come up with three hundred and thirty million for a ballroom. Apple and Nvidia put in twenty-five million apiece, and Nvidia asked that its name stay off the list. And on that same list are people who got a pardon, people holding federal contracts, and one whose federal investigation closed — you pay full freight and get a form letter."

— Sal

"Private money, not one dime of taxpayer funds, that is the entire point — people give to the White House all the time, it is a building, buildings need rooms. Did I say rooms? That does not sound like me. And Nvidia requesting anonymity, that is modesty, you do not put your name on a gift, which is of course why we are all sitting here reading the list of names."

— Chip

THE RECEIPTS

Trump ballroom donors revealed in Washington Post report

The Hill MAINSTREAM § *16:43 EDT*

Major donors to President Trump's White House ballroom project were revealed in a new list obtained by The Washington Post on Thursday. According to the Post, the list reveals more than $330 million in private donations to fund the ballroom effort, most of which was donated prior to the demolition of the East Wing in…

~~'Blatant Corruption': Donors Pouring $330 Million Into Trump Ballroom—and Reaping Benefits—Exposed~~

Trump vowed to pay 'a hundred percent' himself. Donors paid $330M and got pardons, contracts instead.

Common Dreams § *15:17 EDT*

A newly revealed list of companies and billionaire CEOs who donated millions of dollars to President Donald Trump's ballroom construction project shows that Big Tech, according to one government watchdog, "bankrolled it fully expecting a return on their investment." The list, first reported by The Washington Post, doesn't just show the…

But: Sen. Blumenthal: the Secret Service diverted $1.17 billion in appropriated funds toward the ballroom project *Sen. Blumenthal, official release*

Apple, Nvidia each gave $25M to White House ballroom project, among top donors: report

New York Post RIGHT § *15:16 EDT*

The billionaire Adelson family, known for their hospitality holdings, and Charles Ergen, co-founder and chairman of Dish Network, also gave $25 million each to the project, according to a report.

· Report Details How Trump Has Handed Get-Out-of-Jail-Free Card to Wall Street and Big Tech *from the morgue, 7 Oct 2026*

This page is a back-issue: the story as it ran, receipts as they were. The current edition is at the front. The byline is a pen name for a column drafted by a machine and checked by the editor: how this is made.

Cornell bans frat parties, adds investigators, then faces a no-confidence vote over the same case.

By MITCH
INVESTIGATIONS



"Cornell president defends response to Jane Doe allegations in heated faculty meeting", 15 October 2026 (PHOTO VIA ABC NEWS — THE ORIGINAL REPORT)

■ **THE SHORT VERSION**

typed by Dot

WHAT HAPPENED. Cornell's faculty senate met October 14 to discuss no confidence in the president over a 2024 rape allegation.

WHO GETS PAID. Cornell's administration keeps control of the remedy, picking its own investigators and outside reviewer instead of the changes students asked for.

WHAT SLIPS. Students have no vote on the fix; only the faculty senate can act, and so far it has only talked about acting.

WHAT'S NEXT. The faculty senate has not set a date for an actual no-confidence vote; that vote, if it happens, is the next item on Cornell's calendar.

AS IT RAN ON THE FRONT

On October 3, Cornell's own campus police logged a drug arrest at a fraternity house twenty-two hours before a former student says she was drugged and raped in that same house. On October 6, Cornell's trustees named Sally Yates, once the Justice Department's second-ranking official, to review how the university handles sexual misconduct complaints.

Wednesday, the venue changed again. Cornell's faculty senate convened, NBC News reports, to discuss whether it still has confidence in President Michael Kotlikoff over his handling of the alleged 2024 assault. All together now: the senate asked the questions, and Kotlikoff answered them — a defense of his own response, ABC reports, not an account of the allegation itself. NBC obtained audio of the exchange. CBS obtained video of it. The university's press office appears in neither byline....

...(cont) Scrutiny. Sharp questions. A faculty senate — the body with the least formal power on most campuses — produced the two recordings that made it to television this week.

Students didn't wait for the senate to finish before grading the university's other move. Cornell had already announced a ban on fraternity parties and a handful of added investigators. Students for a Democratic Cornell told Truthout that wasn't enough: "Nowhere among these measures is the institutional change that students demand." All together now: the party ban is not the policy. The added investigators are not the inquiry. The outside reviewer named October 6 is not the prosecutor. Three nouns, stacked to resemble one verb — accountability — with no name yet attached to any finding.

The same week, five hundred miles west, the University of Chicago confirmed an almost identical allegation at one of its own fraternity houses. Chicago police named a person of interest. They do not have a suspect in custody; he fled the scene.

Two universities, two fraternity houses, one semester, and so far the same four moves at both campuses: a statement, a restriction, a reviewer, a recording somebody else made public. The question the lawsuits actually ask — who did this, and who answers for it — sits where Tompkins County's district attorney left it in September, when he declined to charge the seven men the 2024 complaint names. It is now Cornell's faculty senate asking that question out loud, on a recording obtained by two networks this week.

"You get caught doing nothing for two years, so you announce a party ban, hire a couple of investigators, and bring in a big name from Washington to "review" you — and you keep the one job that actually decides anything, your own. The faculty can grill the guy for an hour on tape; they still don't get a vote that sticks, and the students who actually live in that building don't get one at all. That's the trick: four new nouns on a press release, zero names on a finding."

— Sal

"Look, the university acted — they banned the parties, they added investigators, they brought in Sally Yates, for God's sake, that's a former deputy attorney general. You want them to do what, convict somebody themselves? That's not — the process is working exactly like it's supposed to. Did I just compare a party ban to a criminal investigation? That's not what I meant, strike that."

— Chip

EARLIER IN THIS STORY

- *Cornell named an outside reviewer; Chicago named a person of interest. Neither named anyone responsible.* By Mitch · the morning edition, 15 October 2026
- *New York Times prints the university crisis playbook; Cornell and Chicago are already following it.* By Mitch · the morning edition, 15 October 2026

THE RECEIPTS

Cornell president defends response to Jane Doe allegations in heated faculty meeting

ABC News MAINSTREAM § *15:07 EDT*

A Cornell faculty meeting grew heated Wednesday as university President Michael Kotlikoff faced harsh questions about the school's response to an alleged 2024 gang rape.

Cornell president faces contentious faculty senate meeting over Jane Doe allegations

NBC News MAINSTREAM § *16:35 EDT*

Cornell University's president was met with scrutiny and sharp questions from its faculty senate on Wednesday, when the group convened to discuss a no-confidence vote over the university's handling of an alleged 2024 sexual assault at a fraternity house, according to an audio recording obtained by NBC News.

Exclusive video shows Cornell University Faculty Senate meeting

CBS News MAINSTREAM § *16:53 EDT*

Exclusive video offers insight into Wednesday's high-stakes meeting at Cornell University.

Students Say Cornell Banning Frat Parties and Adding Investigators Insufficient

Truthout § *15:40 EDT*

"Nowhere among these measures is the institutional change that students demand," said Students for a Democratic Cornell.

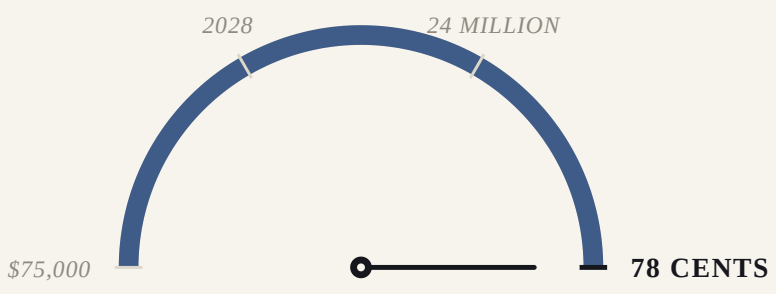
This page is a back-issue: the story as it ran, receipts as they were. The current edition is at the front. The byline is a pen name for a column drafted by a machine and checked by the editor: how this is made.

§62 — 15 OCTOBER 2026

On Social Security

BY LOU
The Word

DEMOCRAT



78 CENTS

What they add up to. The deduction is not an exemption: it phases out above $75,000 of income for a single filer and $150,000 for a couple, and it ends after 2028 [1]. The Joint Committee on Taxation estimates that about 24 million people will still owe tax on their benefits [2]. The agency that pays them is down about 7,000 employees, to a workforce near 50,000, its smallest in decades [3].

And the number underneath all of it. The 2026 Trustees Report projects the retirement trust fund depleted in the fourth quarter of 2032, after which 78 percent of scheduled benefits would be payable; the combined funds last to the third quarter of 2034 [4]. The promise was not to hurt anybody on Social Security. Under current law, from 2032, the arithmetic takes 22 cents of every dollar.

SOURCES

1. The senior deduction phases out above $75,000 ($150,000 joint) and applies for 2025 through 2028 — Internal Revenue Service ↑
2. About 24 million people would still owe tax on their benefits, per the Joint Committee on Taxation — PBS NewsHour, 2 July 2025 ↑
3. About 7,000 staff cut; a workforce near 50,000, the lowest in decades — Federal News Network, 10 June 2026 ↑
4. OASI trust fund depleted in the fourth quarter of 2032, with 78 percent of benefits payable; combined funds to the third quarter of 2034 — National Committee to Preserve Social Security and Medicare, analysis of the 2026 Trustees Report, June 2026 ↑

REPUBLICAN



NO TAX ON SOCIAL SECURITY

The promise came in two parts. The tax: "Seniors should not pay tax on Social Security," posted in July 2024; last summer he said the bill delivered "no tax on Social Security" [1]. The program: "One thing I said and I gave my word — we're not going to hurt anybody on Medicaid, Medicare or Social Security" [2].

There are receipts on this side. The law created an extra $6,000 deduction for each person 65 and older, for 2025 through 2028, open to people who do not itemize [3]. And the agency, after cutting staff, says its phones got faster: average waits down 89 percent, from 42 minutes to under five, with more than 2,000 employees moved to the phone lines [4]. A bigger deduction and a shorter hold are things a retiree can feel. What they add up to is on the other side.

SOURCES

1. "Seniors should not pay tax on Social Security" (31 July 2024); "no tax on Social Security" (29 June 2025), rated Mostly False — PolitiFact, 30 June 2025 ↑
2. "One thing I said and I gave my word — we're not going to hurt anybody on Medicaid, Medicare or Social Security" — ABC News, 27 August 2025 ↑
3. An additional $6,000 deduction per person 65 or older for 2025 through 2028, phasing out above $75,000 ($150,000 joint) — Internal Revenue Service ↑
4. About 7,000 staff cut, a workforce near 50,000; more than 2,000 moved to phones; average phone waits down 89 percent, from 42 minutes to under 5, per the agency — Federal News Network, 10 June 2026 ↑

“My sister-in-law turned sixty-five this year, so she's the expert in our house now. She got the new deduction, six thousand dollars — but only through 2028, and it shrinks once you're over seventy-five thousand. And the tax people in Congress say about twenty-four million people will still pay tax on their benefits anyway. Then she showed me the trustees' report. The retirement fund runs out in the last part of 2032, and after that it pays seventy-eight percent. Excuse me, I forgot my hat. The deduction ends after 2028, and the fund after 2032. Which of those two was the one he promised nobody would hurt?” — Lou

🍺

“"No tax on Social Security." What passed was a six-thousand-dollar deduction for people over sixty-five, phasing out above seventy-five grand, gone after 2028 — and about twenty-four million people still owe tax on their benefits. That's not no tax. That's a coupon. And the retirement trust fund runs dry in the last quarter of 2032, when the check drops to seventy-eight cents on the dollar. He promised not to touch it. Under current law, the arithmetic touches it for him.”

— Sal

🚬

“The deduction means no tax on Social Security for everyone who wasn't paying tax on Social Security, and for the twenty-four million who still are, it's no tax on Social Security in spirit, which is the more important place to have no tax.”

— Chip

The Word today — 👍 👎