The Single-Column Edition

FROM § EACH

THURSDAY, 22 OCTOBER 2026 — THE MORNING EDITION — FREE, FOREVER

Trump credits the sanctions he waived for producing the talks he says enforcing them would have blocked.

BY THE WRECKING CREW
The Remedy Desk

The chief lays out the job again: a law signed, then waived the evening before it was due to bite. On September 19, Trump signed the Lindsey O. Graham Sanctioning Russia and Iran Act, named for the senator who pushed it before he died in July. The waiver landed the day before the statute took effect — the tool built, boxed, and set down before it ever touched the machine. Hours after the waiver, Russia hit Ukraine's power grid with more than 320 drones.

The planner walks the file back a week to see where this was headed. On October 9, Putin phoned Trump to propose a three-way summit with Xi Jinping, the Wall Street Journal reported. Ten days later the Guardian's editorial board warned that Russia wants America and China deciding Ukraine's future with Kyiv left out of the room — "a dangerous return to diplomacy of the strong for the strong." In between, on October 16, with the energy ceasefire Trump had announced on September 14 already collapsed, Trump called Ukraine's renewed strikes on Russian refineries "a disgrace" and said Zelenskyy was harder to deal with than Putin.

The tinkerer gets to the mechanism itself. On October 21, envoy Steve

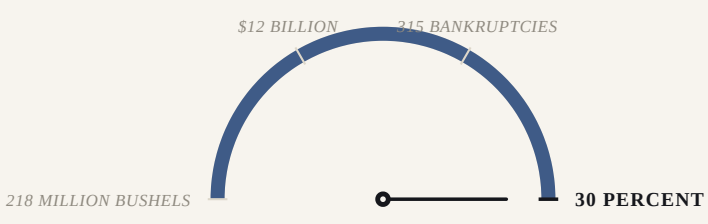
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THE WORD

§68 — 21 OCTOBER 2026

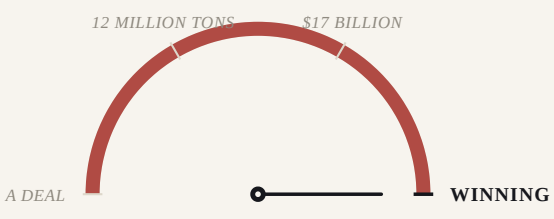
On winning

DEMOCRAT



30 PERCENT

REPUBLICAN



WINNING

"My brother-in-law has a farm, a small one, soybeans mostly, and he keeps his papers in a coffee can. January through August 2024: nine hundred eighty-five million bushels to China. Same months in 2025: two hundred eighteen. Then a letter about the aid — thirty dollars and eighty-eight cents an acre for soybeans. Then the bankruptcy figures he reads every February, and he doesn't like reading them: three hundred fifteen, up from two sixteen. Sorry — I know you're busy. He's supposed to be sick of winning. What part of the coffee can is the winning?" — Lou

... Continued on Page W68

Palantir let new ICE hires in before vetting, sent lawyers in after an MP's speech.

BY RUTH
The Money Desk

Louis Mosley, the UK chief executive of Palantir Technologies, sent letters this month to a handful of British MPs who had criticized the company from the floor of Parliament. Novara Media, which obtained the letters, reports they read as intimidating. The recipients included former Labour leader Jeremy Corbyn and Labour and Cooperative MP Rachael Maskell. Both say the letters will not stop them from continuing to hold Palantir to account.

The federal government has not published the privacy assessment the law requires for a system like ELITE — a filing that was due, and is still sitting wherever filings sit when nobody above them asks where it went.

Line that up next to the letters, and the ledger reads the same company two ways in two months. One column: outside counsel, dispatched to a sitting MP over a floor speech. The other column: a hiring pipeline that let people see restricted immigration data before the background check cleared it. Both are Palantir's columns. Only one of them appears to have been audited by anyone with the standing to ask.

Nobody at Palantir has said what the September gap cost ICE, or what it

... Continued on Page F124

Pastor who says "mistakes were made" about shielding a child abuser leads Kansas Senate race anyway.

BY CHIP
Staff Writer

In mid-September, Kansas got a Republican's blessing for a Democrat: former Gov. Bill Graves crossed the aisle on video to say "Senator Roger Marshall has turned his back on Kansas" and endorsed the Methodist pastor running against him, Adam Hamilton. Two days later, on September 18, an Emerson College poll put Hamilton two points ahead of the incumbent. By October 6, CBS was calling the race a dead heat in a state that has not sent a Democrat to the Senate since 1932. That is the story, and it is a good one to defend: an ex-governor, a poll lead, a hundred-year drought about to end.

Hold that line. Then, on October 2, the New York Post ran the other story: Hamilton, who runs Kansas' largest church, was "accused of shielding 'child predator' who worked for his church" in the mid-2000s. Marshall's campaign built its closing argument on it. Fine — raise it, answer it, move on. It counts as the dodge the allegation already named.

Say it plainly once: the Post's own language is "convicted sex offender Scott Moore," reported accused of molesting teenage boys at church retreats in 2005 and 2006 — retreats run by the church Hamilton has led. Defend the

... Continued on Page A219

Trump tells aides to wait until after the midterms; the Pentagon quietly leaves first

BY LOU
One More Question

I didn't sleep.

That's not color, that's the whole top of the notebook: I did not sleep Tuesday night, and when I told my wife why, she said leave it alone, Lou, it'll still be there in the morning. I did not leave it alone.

Quick recap for anyone just opening the fold, because this didn't start this week. The man in the Oval told aides he'd wait on Iran until after the midterms. Tehran's own top security official came out and said — and I wrote this down, because I made my wife read it back to me twice — that Iran believes a strike could land before Americans vote anyway. That's one page of the file. Here's the page sitting next to it.

CBS News reports, sources telling them directly, that the United States has quietly reduced its troop footprint at posts across the Middle East, citing threats from Iran and the Houthis. Separate story, separate outlet — I want to be careful here, because I got this wrong on my first pass and had to cross it out — the New York Post reports the government is pulling its own employees out of Saudi Arabia, while the president weighs direct military action against

... Continued on Page T29

Meta's $25 billion fine is one-ninth of what the law actually allowed.

BY RUTH
The Money Desk

Judge Francis Mathew signed the order in Santa Fe on Wednesday: $25 billion, the largest sum a court has ordered Meta to pay, after a jury found the company misled users for years about what happened to their data. Attorney General Raúl Torrez's office called it one of the largest corporate penalties in American history. The same case record carries the other number: state law allowed up to $219.5 billion. Twenty-five billion comes to about eleven cents of that dollar.

This is not the first invoice for the same conduct. The Federal Trade Commission fined Meta $5 billion in 2019 over the identical Cambridge Analytica breach — the breach that became public eight years ago this spring, when a consulting firm working for the 2016 Trump campaign was found to have pulled the data of tens of millions of Facebook users without asking them.

Eight weeks before this verdict, forty-seven states closed a different account: up to $17.1 billion for building Instagram and Facebook to addict children. California's attorney general said the deal would make the platforms

... Continued on Page F123

Trump turns a Paris riot into his midterm warning; Le Monde calls it deliberate, Macron calls it stupid.

BY THE LODGERS
The Euro Desk

Today we are making a closing argument, which is not a dish you can get over here, so I shall go slowly. A closing argument needs a filling or it collapses on the way to the table, and this year Trump and his inner circle have reached across the Atlantic for one: a weekend of rioting in Paris, folded in to warn that a Democratic Congress would bring the same chaos and destruction home.

Start the filling early, before anyone notices it travelling. On September twenty-third the Washington Examiner had Macron waving off Trump's rivalry over a triumphal arch, calling monuments bigger than either man. On October seventeenth, with buildings burning, Macron promised rioters would be 'prosecuted and punished'; the same day the protests themselves widened to a hundred and forty cities, the demonstrators citing inequality, the cost of living and the state of French schools.

Clive *Retaken. That's rather the word for what I did to my own closing stanza, if we're trading retakings.*

Gary *Retaken. You retook a stanza. I could retake the back door with a crow-*

... Continued on Page A219

DOJ watchdog says weaponized prosecution isn't its job, hands it to the office it already gutted.

BY MITCH
Investigations

On October 1, in a 26-page order, Judge Todd Edelman dismissed the Reflecting Pool vandalism case against the former Olympic canoeist with prejudice — the Justice Department can never bring it again. Attorney Jeanine Pirro, a weaponization ploy, and noted the case had already imploded on its own before the dismissal made it official.

A dismissal with prejudice is usually the last page of a story. Here it was the first page of a different one. Five days later, on October 6, Hearn's lawyers wrote to the inspectors general at the Justice Department and the Interior Department, asking them to examine how a felony case against an Olympian with no record of vandalism got built in the first place. The letter went to two watchdogs. Fifteen days after that, one of them answered.

On October 21, the Justice Department's inspector general told Hearn's lawyers the complaint fell outside its jurisdiction. All together now — read that sentence twice: a prosecution a sitting judge called weaponized, examined by the office built to examine prosecutions, is not this office's business. The inspector general did not decline to act on the complaint. It declined to

... Continued on Page A219

"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

Snow held the fox's prints till the thaw,
while the farmer mended the door.

ENOCH · THE OWNERSHIP DESK

Palantir let new ICE hires in before vetting, sent lawyers in after an MP's speech.

By **RUTH**
THE MONEY DESK

■ **THE SHORT VERSION**

typed by Dot

WHAT HAPPENED. Palantir's UK chief executive sent letters to British MPs who criticized the company in Parliament.

WHO GETS PAID. Palantir Technologies, the US spytech contractor whose ICE data contract the same MPs had criticized.

WHAT SLIPS. Parliament's ability to question a government contractor on the floor without facing its lawyers afterward.

WHAT'S NEXT. The MPs say the letters will not change what they say next in Parliament; nothing further is currently scheduled.

AS IT RAN ON THE FRONT

Louis Mosley, the UK chief executive of Palantir Technologies, sent letters this month to a handful of British MPs who had criticized the company from the floor of Parliament. Novara Media, which obtained the letters, reports they read as intimidating. The recipients included former Labour leader Jeremy Corbyn and Labour and Cooperative MP Rachael Maskell. Both say the letters will not stop them from continuing to hold Palantir to account.

The federal government has not published the privacy assessment the law requires for a system like ELITE — a filing that was due, and is still sitting wherever filings sit when nobody above them asks where it went....

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Nobody at Palantir has said what the September gap cost ICE, or what it cost to find out. Nobody has said what the October letters cost either. The company is not required to say, and as far as the public record shows, nobody with subpoena power has asked. That is not proof of a connection between the two line items. It is proof that neither one carries a public price tag, which is its own kind of finding, hon.

What the MPs say is simpler than any of that: the letters do not change what they plan to say next. Parliament has a floor, the floor has a record, and the record stays open to anyone who wants to stand up and name a contractor by name, intimidating letters or not. Whether that stays true depends on how many more letters go out, and how many members decide the floor isn't worth it. For now the count is two names, one company, and zero changes in what either of them plans to say.



"Here's the trick: they can't be bothered to check who they hand restricted immigration data to, but they've got a lawyer on retainer for the first backbencher who says their name out loud in Parliament. That's not a company, that's a priority list, and you're not on it. When the vetting is optional and the lawyering isn't, you already know whose floor speech they're actually scared of."

— Sal



"Look, a company has every right to correct the record when a member of Parliament gets the facts wrong — that's not intimidation, that's just, uh, robust communication. The hiring thing is a separate HR matter being handled internally, it has nothing to do with — did I just connect those two stories myself? Forget I said that."

— Chip

THE RECEIPTS

~~Palantir Targets MPs With 'Intimidating' Letters~~

Palantir sent 'intimidating' letters to MPs for criticizing it in parliament

Novara Media § *05:18 EDT*

British MPs who criticised Palantir in parliament received "intimidating" letters from the US spytech firm, Novara Media can reveal. The MPs say it won't stop them from continuing to hold Palantir to account.

· ICE Gave New Hires Access to Restricted Info on Palantir App Before They Passed Background Checks *from the morgue, 3 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.

Pastor who says "mistakes were made" about shielding a child abuser leads Kansas Senate race anyway.

By **CHIP**
STAFF WRITER

“Kansas Senate candidate Adam Hamilton admits ‘mistakes were made’ in church sexual abuse scandal”, 22 October 2026 (PHOTO VIA NEW YORK POST — THE ORIGINAL REPORT)

■ **THE SHORT VERSION**
typed by Dot

WHAT HAPPENED. Senate candidate Adam Hamilton told debate viewers "mistakes were made" in his church's handling of an abuse case.

WHO GETS PAID. Incumbent Senator Roger Marshall's campaign gets its closing-week attack line against Hamilton.

WHAT SLIPS. Nothing slips here yet.

WHAT'S NEXT. Kansas votes in twelve days, on November 3.

AS IT RAN ON THE FRONT

In mid-September, Kansas got a Republican's blessing for a Democrat: former Gov. Bill Graves crossed the aisle on video to say "Senator Roger Marshall has turned his back on Kansas" and endorsed the Methodist pastor running against him, Adam Hamilton. Two days later, on September 18, an Emerson College poll put Hamilton two points ahead of the incumbent. By October 6, CBS was calling the race a dead heat in a state that has not sent a Democrat to the Senate since 1932. That is the story, and it is a good one to defend: an ex-governor, a poll lead, a hundred-year drought about to end.

Hold that line. Then, on October 2, the New York Post ran the other story: Hamilton, who runs Kansas' largest church, was "accused of shielding 'child predator' who worked for his church" in the mid-2000s. Marshall's campaign built its closing argument on it. Fine — raise it, answer it, move on. It counts as the dodge the allegation already named....

...(cont) Say it plainly once: the Post's own language is "convicted sex offender Scott Moore," reported accused of molesting teenage boys at church retreats in 2005 and 2006 — retreats run by the church Hamilton has led. Defend the phrasing if the job requires it: passive voice protects no one and was used anyway, because the alternative sentence — "my church employed him, and we knew, or should have" — is the one a candidate two points up in red Kansas has to weigh against the hundred-year wait finally ending on his watch.

Marshall's campaign is not wrong about the timeline. It is just late with it, and accurate anyway. Kansas has had both stories since September — the endorsement and the allegation — and chose, as of the last poll, to keep Hamilton ahead regardless. That is not a defense of "mistakes were made." It is a measurement of how little the phrase had to do.



“This isn't about one church board, it's about every institution that figured quiet was cheaper than correct — and it worked, because he's still ahead in a state that hasn't picked a Democrat since the Depression. The confession showed up on a debate stage, not before the primary, because "mistakes were made" is what you say once the lead already belongs to you.”

— Sal



“Look, Marshall's campaign is just giving Kansas voters the full record before they vote — that's what a closing argument is for, timed exactly when — okay, timed exactly when the race is closest and there's no time left for Hamilton to answer it twice. Did I say timed? That's not — that's just how campaigns work, that's not spin, that's calendar.”

— Chip

THE RECEIPTS

Kansas Senate candidate Adam Hamilton admits ‘mistakes were made’ in church sexual abuse scandal

New York Post RIGHT § *23:56 EDT*

Hamilton, a Methodist pastor who runs Kansas' largest church, is facing late-campaign attacks from incumbent Republican Sen. Roger Marshall over now-convicted sex offender Scott Moore, who was accused of molesting teenage boys at church retreats in 2005 and 2006.

· Kansas Senate Dem nominee Adam Hamilton accused of shielding ‘child predator’ who worked for his church in mid-2000s *from the morgue, 2 Oct 2026*

· Poll puts Democrat Adam Hamilton ahead in typically red Kansas *from the morgue, 18 Sep 2026*

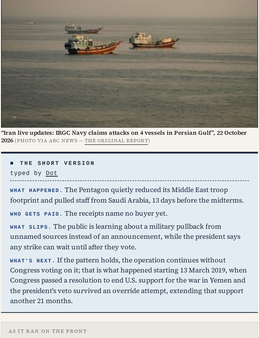
· Former Republican governor backs Democrat over Marshall in Kansas Senate race *from the morgue, 16 Sep 2026*

· Kansas could send first Democrat to Senate since 1932 as polls shows close Hamilton-Marshall race *from the morgue, 6 Oct 2026*

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Trump tells aides to wait until after the midterms; the Pentagon quietly leaves first

By LOU
ONE MORE QUESTION



"Iran live updates: IRGC Navy claims attacks on 4 vessels in Persian Gulf", 22 October 2026 (PHOTO VIA ABC NEWS — THE ORIGINAL REPORT)

■ THE SHORT VERSION
typed by DOT

WHAT HAPPENED. The Pentagon quietly reduced its Middle East troop footprint and pulled staff from Saudi Arabia, 13 days before the midterms.

WHO GETS PAID. The receipts name no buyer yet.

WHAT SLIPS. The public is learning about a military pullback from unnamed sources instead of an announcement, while the president says any strike can wait until after they vote.

WHAT'S NEXT. If the pattern holds, the operation continues without Congress voting on it; that is what happened starting 13 March 2019, when Congress passed a resolution to end U.S. support for the war in Yemen and the president's veto survived an override attempt, extending that support another 21 months.

AS IT RAN ON THE FRONT

I didn't sleep.

That's not color, that's the whole top of the notebook: I did not sleep Tuesday night, and when I told my wife why, she said leave it alone, Lou, it'll still be there in the morning. I did not leave it alone....

...(cont) Quick recap for anyone just opening the fold, because this didn't start this week. The man in the Oval told aides he'd wait on Iran until after the midterms. Tehran's own top security official came out and said — and I wrote this down, because I made my wife read it back to me twice — that Iran believes a strike could land before Americans vote anyway. That's one page of the file. Here's the page sitting next to it.

CBS News reports, sources telling them directly, that the United States has quietly reduced its troop footprint at posts across the Middle East, citing threats from Iran and the Houthis. Separate story, separate outlet — I want to be careful here, because I got this wrong on my first pass and had to cross it out — the New York Post reports the government is pulling its own employees out of Saudi Arabia, while the president weighs direct military action against the Houthis. Two outlets. Two sourcings. Same week.

Now here's the word that had me up past midnight: footprint.

Not a loaded word. A planning word. The kind a press shop reaches for because it sounds like something that happens to a place on its own, like weather. I went out to the garage around eleven — told myself I needed the flashlight, which was half true — and there's a stain on the concrete where my car used to sit before the transmission went and we started leaving it at the curb. The car is gone. The footprint stays until enough rain comes through. Nobody has to announce they moved the car for the stain to already be telling you they did.

So: does a footprint get smaller by itself, or does somebody give the order and then let the stain speak for them?

Back to the file, because the week didn't start Wednesday. September 21st, the State Department told Americans in the region to exercise heightened vigilance after Houthi strikes hit Riyadh. October 8th, the Houthis claimed two ballistic missiles into Riyadh's King Khalid airport. October 13th, by one outlet's count, a strike on that same airport killed at least twelve and hurt over three hundred — the deadliest hit on Saudi soil in better than a decade, with Yemen's whole war sliding back into what they called full-scale civil war. And September 18th — not tonight's fixation, but I can't put it down either — The Hill reported the Pentagon's own public count left out two service members who died during the Iran war. One of them, a major, at a camp in Kuwait, cause on the file listed as undetermined. Just the one entry. Just that blank.

Today — not yesterday, today, same page as this column — the airport was Dammam, King Fahd International, one dead, eight wounded, Saudi officials confirmed it themselves. Today Iran's navy says it hit four more vessels in the Gulf. Today is also the day CBS says the footprint got smaller.

My wife's asleep. I'm not waking her over a parking space. But before I file this I want to ask the page one plain thing: if the official word is small, and the quiet action is pull back, which one is actually happening thirteen days out?

Oh — hang on, don't go yet, one more thing while you're standing there. The file says the pullback came because of threats from Iran and the Houthis — the same two names the president says can wait past November. So when the number goes down and nobody puts out a release about it, who finds out first, Tehran, or the people voting in thirteen days on whatever's left of the footprint.

"They're not announcing a drawdown, they're just letting the oil stain do the talking — pull the staff, shrink the footprint, and leave the 'wait till after the midterms' line standing out front like nothing moved. You don't evacuate people from a country you're calm about. Thirteen days out, that's not patience, that's getting the furniture off the porch before the storm everyone swears isn't coming."
— *Sal*

"Look, prudent force posture adjustments happen constantly, this is standard contingency planning, nothing — okay, 'nothing to see here' is maybe not the line I want on the record. The administration has been clear the timeline is the president's call, full stop, and any troop movement is just — I mean, it's just logistics, it doesn't mean the timeline changed. Does it. I'm asking you now."
— *Chip*

EARLIER IN THIS STORY

— *Trump's promise to wait until after the midterms reaches Tehran, which doesn't believe it, 13 days out.* By Lou · the afternoon edition, 21 October 2026

— *Press secretary fired after five days, replacing the Scaramucci as American politics' base unit of time* By The Lodgers · the afternoon edition, 16 October 2026

— *White House declines to rule out pre-election Iran strikes; oil traders rule them in at $104.60.* By Lou · the afternoon edition, 8 October 2026

— *Washington's own statute gives it thirty days to decide what 'something meaningful' from Iran means.* By Mitch · the morning edition, 8 October 2026

— *Diesel relief rule dies by executive order; Chevron's own CEO says the backup plan would make prices worse.* By Mort · the noon edition, 7 October 2026

— *White House lifts diesel tax-exemption rule, experts say won't lower the prices it was sold to fix* By Mort · the coffee break edition, 7 October 2026

THE RECEIPTS

Iran live updates: IRGC Navy claims attacks on 4 vessels in Persian Gulf
ABC News | MAINSTREAM | *04:41 EDT*

President Donald Trump announced "major combat operations" against Iran on Feb. 28.

I killed, 8 wounded in Saudi Arabia airport attack
The Hill | MAINSTREAM | *20:05 EDT*

An attack on an airport in Saudi Arabia by the Iranian-backed Houthis killed one person and injured eight others, officials confirmed Wednesday. Saudi Arabia's General Authority of Civil Aviation said in a statement that the rebel group targeted the King Fahd International Airport in the eastern city of Dammam on Wednesday evening. Eight...

U.S. reducing troop footprint in Middle East, sources say
CBS News | MAINSTREAM | *05:50 EDT*

The U.S. military has quietly reduced its footprint at posts in the Middle East due to ongoing threats from Iran and its Houthis allies in Yemen, sources tell CBS News.

US pulls government employees from Saudi Arabia as kingdom comes under Houthi fire
New York Post | RIGHT | *04:05 EDT*

President Trump is weighing direct military action against the Iran-backed group.

~~Yemen Plunges Back into "Full-Scale Civil War," Houthis Trade Strikes with Saudi Arabia~~

Yemen's civil war reignites as Trump weighs joining Saudi's side
Democracy Now! | *08:16 EDT*

Yemen's Ansar Allah, also known as the Houthis, have repeatedly attacked the Saudi capital of Riyadh in recent days. On Saturday, a missile strike on the airport in Riyadh killed at least 12 and injured over 300 in the deadliest attack on Saudi soil in over a decade. President Trump is now weighing whether to join the Saudi fight against...

· Americans in Middle East warned to 'exercise heightened vigilance' following strikes on Riyadh *from the morgue, 21 Sep 2026*

· Pentagon's count leaves out some deaths in Middle East during Iran war *from the morgue, 18 Sep 2026*

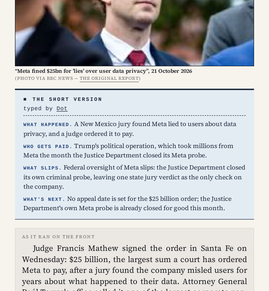
· Saudi Arabia sees disruptions at Riyadh airport amid ballistic missile attacks from Houthis *from the morgue, 8 Oct 2026*

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THE TALLY

Meta's $25 billion fine is one-ninth of what the law actually allowed.

By RUTH
THE MONEY DESK



"Meta fined $25bn for 'lies' over user data privacy", 21 October 2026
(PHOTO VIA BBC NEWS — THE OFFICIAL REPORT)

★ THE SHORT VERSION
typed by Bot

WHAT HAPPENED. A New Mexico jury found Meta lied to users about data privacy, and a judge ordered it to pay.

WHO GETS PAID. Trump's political operation, which took millions from Meta the month the Justice Department closed its Meta probe.

WHAT ELSE. Federal oversight of Meta slips: the Justice Department closed its own criminal probe, leaving one state jury verdict as the only check on the company.

WHAT'S NEXT. No appeal date is set for the $25 billion order; the Justice Department's own Meta probe is already closed for good this month.

AS IT RAN ON THE FRONT

Judge Francis Mathew signed the order in Santa Fe on Wednesday: $25 billion, the largest sum a court has ordered Meta to pay, after a jury found the company misled users for years about what happened to their data. Attorney General Raúl Torrez's office called it one of the largest corporate penalties in American history. The same case record carries the other number: state law allowed up to $219.5 billion. Twenty-five billion comes to about eleven cents of that total.

This is not the first enforcement action the Federal Trade Commission fined Meta $5 billion in 2019 over the identical Cambridge Analytica breach — the breach that became public eight years ago this spring, when a consulting firm working for the 2016 Trump campaign was found to have pulled the data of tens of millions of Facebook users without asking them....

...(cont) Eight weeks before this verdict, forty-seven states closed a different account: up to $17.1 billion for building Instagram and Facebook to addict children. California's attorney general said the deal would make the platforms "less dangerous for our kids." Three weeks later, the real math arrived: Meta made $130 billion off the same underage users in the period it was being sued for exploiting them. The settlement covers about thirteen cents of every profit dollar. Hon, that is not a penalty, that is a cost of doing business, filed on time.

The company keeps the other side of its ledger open too. Senate Democrats wrote Meta on October 14th that it had used a research-and-development tax credit — written for laboratories, not warehouses — to cut $6.6 billion off its federal tax bill for the data centers it is building to run on exactly the kind of user data this trial says it took without consent.

Two days after that letter, Bloomberg Law reported that Justice Department leadership ordered prosecutors in the Western District of Virginia to close a separate, years-old criminal investigation into Meta over allegedly profiting from illegal drug sales on its platforms — after lobbying from Meta's own legal team, and after the company's money reached President Trump's political operation. Five days after that, a New Mexico jury did what the Justice Department had just declined to.

Add up what is open on the books this month: one federal probe closed, one 2019 fine of $5 billion, one child-safety settlement running about thirteen cents on the profit dollar, one tax credit worth $6.6 billion, and one $25 billion order a state calls historic and the statute calls a fraction. Only one number moved money out of Meta toward the public this week. It came from a jury, not a department.

▼ FROM THE CORNER ▼
DUTCH

THE JUSTICE DEPARTMENT CLOSED A CRIMINAL INVESTIGATION INTO META OVER ILLEGAL drug sales to children on its platforms on October 16th, five days before a New Mexico jury ordered Meta to pay $25 billion in a separate privacy case. That is not prosecutorial discretion, it's a purchase: the federal case vanished the week Meta's money reached President Trump's political operation, and the only number that survived was a jury's, not a department's. Because the agency built to police drug sales to children on Meta's platforms just closed that file, and because nothing federal stands behind it now, the only check left on Meta lands in a kid's feed is whoever opens the backpack and checks the phone first.

"They handed Meta the biggest fine they've ever handed it and called it historic, except the law said they could've taken nine times that — call it what it is, a tip jar. Same month, the Justice Department killed its own criminal case on Meta over drug sales to kids, right around when the money Meta sent to Trump's political operation got reported. The only check that actually landed on Meta this week came from twelve people in a jury box, not from the agency whose whole job was to do it first."
— Sal

"Twenty-five billion dollars — that's real accountability, that's the system working, full stop. Did the Justice Department also just drop an actual criminal investigation into the same company? Sure, but that's prosecutorial discretion, that's unrelated, that's — okay, even I don't love how that sounds."
— Chip

EARLIER IN THIS STORY

— *Venezuelan billionaire's daughter hires Trump lawyer Alina Habba; billionaire gets pardon shortly after.* By Ruth · the morning edition, 21 October 2026

THE RECEIPTS

Meta fined $25bn for 'lies' over user data privacy
BBC News | MAINSTREAM | *17:49 EDT*
The fine is the largest to date against Facebook's owner, larger than an $18bn deal with California.

~~Meta Obtains Five-Year Deal Exploiting Tax Credit to Save Billions on AI Data Centers~~ [Bloomberg]

Meta dodged $6.6 billion in taxes using an R&D credit - over 10% of all US research credits claimed
Common Dreams | *15:01 EDT*
A group of Democratic senators wrote Tuesday that Meta is violating "the spirit and, potentially, the letter" of federal tax law by using a research and development tax credit to save billions of dollars on its massive data center buildout. In a letter to Meta CEO Mark Zuckerberg, the Senate Democrats noted that the $1.9 trillion company...

Meta Ordered to Pay $25 Billion Over Cambridge Analytica Privacy Violations
The New York Times | MAINSTREAM | *16:37 EDT*
The penalty, one of the largest levied against the tech giant, stemmed from a lawsuit by New Mexico claiming the social media company had misled users about their data privacy.

Meta ordered to pay $25 billion to New Mexico in data privacy ruling
CBS News | MAINSTREAM | *15:32 EDT*
A jury found that the social media company had deceived consumers for years about its data privacy policies.

Meta ordered to pay $25bn to New Mexico in Cambridge Analytica data privacy case
The Guardian | MAINSTREAM | *14:34 EDT*
Jury had found Meta misled consumers after Trump's 2016 presidential campaign obtained user data without consent A judge in New Mexico ordered Meta Platforms to pay $25bn on Wednesday after a jury found the company had misled consumers in a case arising from allegations that a political consulting firm involved in Donald Trump's 2016...

But: The DOJ disbanded its crypto enforcement team in April 2025 and ordered inconsistent investigations closed - while the president's family runs a crypto business (CNN, 4 April 2025) [thanks to mona]

'What Meta's Money Is Buying': DOJ Halts Probe of Facebook Owner That Has Given Trump Millions
Common Dreams | *14:44 EDT*
Top officials at the US Department of Justice have reportedly halted a years-long criminal investigation into Facebook parent company Meta for allegedly facilitating—and profiting from—the illegal sale of drugs on its platforms, including to children. Bloomberg Law reported Thursday that "senior leaders" at the Justice Department...

Meta hit with $25 billion penalty over Cambridge Analytica data privacy violations
Washington Examiner RIGHT | *13:21 EDT*
A New Mexico court ordered Meta, the parent company of Facebook, to pay a $25 billion penalty over data privacy violations connected to the Cambridge Analytica scandal. The whopping penalty comes more than eight years after the stories of the data-harvesting scandal first broke and sparked political uproar in the United States....

~~'Historic Day': New Mexico Judge Orders Meta to Pay $25 Billion in Data Privacy Case~~

Meta's 'historic' $25 billion fine is about 11% of what the law allowed
Common Dreams | *17:14 EDT*
A New Mexico judge on Wednesday ordered Meta to pay $25 billion for misleading users about data privacy—and while state Attorney General Raúl Torrez's office touted it as "one of the largest financial penalties against a corporation in US history," it's also just a fraction of the $219.5 billion warranted under the law. The case stems...

- Child safety pays: Meta paid $17 billion for exploiting children — and made $130 billion doing it *from the morgue, 14 Sep 2026*
- As Meta Agrees to $17B Settlement, Now Is the Time to Regulate AI Before It's Too Late: Amba Kak *from the morgue, 27 Aug 2026*
- $17 Billion Meta Settlement 'Will Make Social Media Less Dangerous for Our Kids,' Says California AG *from the morgue, 26 Aug 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.

Trump turns a Paris riot into his midterm warning; Le Monde calls it deliberate, Macron calls it stupid.

By THE LODGERS
THE EURO DESK



"France has fallen. America can't be next", 21 October 2026
(PHOTO VIA WASHINGTON EXAMINER — THE ORIGINAL REPORT)

■ THE SHORT VERSION
typed by Dot

WHAT HAPPENED. Trump's campaign turned a Paris riot into a midterm warning that Democrats would bring the same chaos home.

WHO GETS PAID. Trump's campaign gets a ready-made turnout pitch to energize the MAGA base before the midterms.

WHAT SLIPS. The voters' check slips here: Macron says there is no evidence behind the "foreign manipulation" warning driving the argument.

WHAT'S NEXT. If this pattern holds, the same messaging continues through Election Day; the vote is November 3.

AS IT RAN ON THE FRONT

Today we are making a closing argument, which is not a dish you can get over here, so I shall go slowly. A closing argument needs a filling or it collapses on the way to the table, and this year Trump and his inner circle have reached across the Atlantic for one: a weekend of rioting in Paris, folded in to warn that a Democratic Congress would bring the same chaos and destruction home.

Start the filling early, before anyone notices it travelling. On September twenty-third the Washington Examiner had Macron waving off Trump's rivalry over a triumphal arch, calling monuments bigger than either man. On October seventeenth, with buildings burning, Macron promised rioters would be 'prosecuted and punished'; the same day the protests themselves widened to a hundred and forty cities, the demonstrators citing inequality, the cost of living and the state of French schools....

CLIVE *Retaken. That's rather the word for what I did to my own closing stanza, if we're trading retakings.*

GABY *Retaken. You retook a stanza. I could retake the back door with a crowbar before lunch and have something to show the house for it.*

Now the filling arrives fully cooked. On Wednesday the New York Post served looting, buildings on fire and thousands of arrests under the heading 'Anarchy in France,' and the Washington Examiner answered with 'France has fallen. America can't be next,' putting 'protesters' and 'protesting' in quotation marks, the way one holds a thing one does not believe. Macron, visiting Doha, called the comments 'stupid' and 'unacceptable,' and said there was no evidence foreign actors had instigated the protests. He warned the French public of 'foreign manipulation' in the same breath. You will be looking for the evidence under that warning. There is none in this kitchen; the warning is what stands in for it.

KEITH *Evidence. I don't need evidence, I need a market. Two leaders trading insults over a riot, I could sell that twice before Thursday.*

Le Monde, which is what they read there, prints it plainest: Trump's camp 'exploiting' France's riots to energize the MAGA base, the violence of October seventeenth turned to warnings about immigration and Muslims, timed to a Democratic win in Congress that would supposedly expose America to the same dangers.

It serves Trump's campaign a closing argument thirteen days before Americans vote. The bill for the filling goes first to the thousands already arrested in France, and then to whatever the Americans themselves decide on November third.

ROB *Not much notice, is it. Less than the landlord gave us about the meter, and at least the French get arrested for their trouble.*

"A guy picks a riot in another country to scare voters about his own, and the ally's own newspaper says flat out it's strategy for turnout. Macron, who actually watched the fires, calls it stupid. That's the tell: when the threat on your screen is further from your house than the rent you can't make, somebody's selling you a fire so you won't look at the one at home."

— *Sal*

"He's not blaming France, he's just pointing out a pattern — riots over there, Democrats over here, connect the dots yourself. Macron calling it "stupid" is pretty rich coming from the guy whose own capital's on fire — wait, did I just say his capital's on fire? That's not — that's a separate issue."

— *Chip*

EARLIER IN THIS STORY

- *Trump calls Paris riots a preview of Democratic Congress, two weeks before voters decide.* By Ruth · the afternoon edition, 20 October 2026
- *Kansas rally recasts French school-funding protest as migrants, jihadists and communists, two weeks before Republicans face voters.* By Ruth · the morning edition, 20 October 2026
- *The $5,000 promise ships this month as a $90 check, less than half one Medicare premium.* By Mort · the midnight edition, 4 October 2026
- *Trump priced a Republican Congress at $5,000 an adult; the checks mailing this month are $90.* By Mort · the noon edition, 3 October 2026
- *Putin pitches oil deal to Trump's son-in-law, the man negotiating peace with Putin.* By Ruth · the sunrise edition, 3 October 2026
- *Seniors get $90 once; the president's oil stocks gain up to $4.4 million from the war.* By Ruth · the wee small hours edition, 3 October 2026

THE RECEIPTS

Nat: Teachers spent an average of $895 of their own money on classroom supplies last school year *Adopt A Classroom.org 2025 Teacher Spending Survey*

France has fallen. America can't be next
Washington Examiner | RIGHT | *10:19 EDT*

Since it's a day that ends in "day," the French seem busy doing what they do best: expressing their political dissatisfaction by having a good old-fashioned riot. This time (according to the legacy media), the "protesters"

~~How Trump's camp is exploiting France's riots to energize the MAGA base~~

13 days before the vote, Trump turns Paris riots into a campaign ad
Le Monde | MAINSTREAM | *02:26 EDT*

The US president and his inner circle have repeatedly used the violence of October 17 to denounce immigration and Muslims, warning that a Democratic victory in the midterm elections on November 3 would expose the United States to the same dangers.

~~The Government Is Trembling': Protests Erupt in France; Spreading to 140 Cities~~

The Ultra-Rich Have Taken More and More': French Protests Spread to 190 Cities
Common Dreams | *12:53 EDT*

Protests erupted throughout France on Saturday, with demonstrators citing a wide variety of grievances including inequality, the high cost of living, and poor conditions in the nation's schools. As reported by Agence France-Presse, tens of thousands of demonstrators marched in Paris and other cities to protest what they said was inaction...

Macron slams Trump for 'stupid' comments about French riots and warns public of 'foreign manipulation'
Washington Examiner | RIGHT | *11:25 EDT*

French President Emmanuel Macron accused President Donald Trump of making "stupid" and "unacceptable" comments about the riots that have ravaged Paris, accusing him of twisting the chaos for his own political gain.

~~The Bastille Has Been Retaken~~

Rats in the classrooms, no teacher for 6 months, French student says — 71,500 marched
The Bulier | *08:00 EDT*

High school students across France on Thursday once again took to the streets to protest against against the state of the country's schools.

Nat: Teachers spent an average of $895 of their own money on classroom supplies last school year *Adopt A Classroom.org 2025 Teacher Spending Survey*

Anarchy in France: Behind the riots and violent protests
New York Post | RIGHT | *10:11 EDT*

Looting, rioting, and entire buildings going up in flames. These are the scenes that have poured out of France over the weekend showing anarchy nationwide, leading to thousands of arrests. The riots, initially attributed to discontent over the state of education and the high cost of living, come as furious students all over the world...

Macron says violent rioters will be 'prosecuted and punished' as buildings burn in France
Washington Examiner | RIGHT | *17:18 EDT*

French President Emmanuel Macron released a statement on Saturday afternoon denouncing violent rioters who defaced national landmarks and attacked law enforcement officers in an escalation of protests that began last month. "No room for violence in our Republic," he said, referencing the increasingly hostile clashes between protesters...

· Macron scoffs at Trump arch rivalry: 'Monuments are bigger than ourselves' *from the morgue, 23 Sep 2026*

· French student riots spill across Europe as Belgian minister attributes violence to antifa *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.

DOJ watchdog says weaponized prosecution isn't its job, hands it to the office it already gutted.

By MITCH

INVESTIGATIONS



“DOJ watchdog passes off investigation into case of Olympian who was charged in Reflecting Pool case”, 21 October 2026

(PHOTO VIA WASHINGTON EXAMINER — THE ORIGINAL REPORT)

■ **THE SHORT VERSION**

typed by Dot

WHAT HAPPENED. A judge dismissed the Olympian's vandalism case with prejudice, and the Justice Department's inspector general then declined to investigate the prosecution.

WHO GETS PAID. The Justice Department's own prosecutors keep the complaint against them inside the department, routed to an internal unit instead of an outside watchdog.

WHAT SLIPS. The outside check on a prosecution a judge called weaponized slips, since the complaint lands inside the same department it is about.

WHAT'S NEXT. The complaint now sits with the Office of Professional Responsibility, the unit Hearn's lawyers say the department already gutted of independence, with no date set in the record for any review.

AS IT RAN ON THE FRONT

On October 1, in a 26-page order, Judge Todd Edelman dismissed the Reflecting Pool vandalism case against the former Olympic canoeist with prejudice — the Justice Department can never bring it again. Attorney Jeanine Pirro, a weaponization ploy, and noted the case had already imploded on its own before the dismissal made it official.

A dismissal with prejudice is usually the last page of a story. Here it was the first page of a different one. Five days later, on October 6, Hearn's lawyers wrote to the inspectors general at the Justice Department and the Interior Department, asking them to examine how a felony case against an Olympian with no record of vandalism got built in the first place. The letter went to two watchdogs. Fifteen days after that, one of them answered....

...(cont) On October 21, the Justice Department's inspector general told Hearn's lawyers the complaint fell outside its jurisdiction. All together now — read that sentence twice: a prosecution a sitting judge called weaponized, examined by the office built to examine prosecutions, is not this office's business. The inspector general did not decline to act on the complaint. It declined to recognize it as the kind of complaint it handles.

The watchdog did not leave the letter unanswered, exactly. It forwarded it to the Office of Professional Responsibility, the Justice Department's internal unit for investigating its own lawyers.

The case against Hearn ran its entire life inside the building that charged him. It was built by prosecutors employed by the same department that employed the prosecutor who brought it. It was ended by a judge who does not work there. And when Hearn's lawyers asked the one office designed to check that department's own conduct, the request was filed under a jurisdiction that does not cover it, then handed to a desk the department has already emptied out. The case is closed. The question the dismissal order asked out loud is sitting in a drawer marked Office of Professional Responsibility, waiting for whoever is left there to open it.



“They build a felony case, a judge calls it weaponized and kills it for good, and the office that's supposed to check how it got built tells you it's not their department. Then they ship the complaint to the one unit they already hollowed out themselves — that's not oversight, that's a filing cabinet with the key already thrown away. This is how you charge someone twice: once in court, once by making sure nobody ever answers for the first time.”

— Sal



“Look, jurisdiction is jurisdiction — the inspector general reviews Justice Department conduct, not what a judge writes in a dismissal order, that's just how the — did I say chain of command? Forget I said that. Point is, the Office of Professional Responsibility exists for exactly this. It's right there in the name.”

— Chip

THE RECEIPTS

~~DOJ watchdog declines investigation in Reflecting Pool case~~

DOJ reroutes the case to an internal watchdog it already gutted

CBS News MAINSTREAM § *09:42 EDT*

Hearn's lawyers complain the inspector general has referred the case to the Office of Professional Responsibility, a unit that was largely gutted and lacks independence.

But: **The DOJ disbanded its own crypto enforcement team and ordered inconsistent investigations closed in April 2025 - while the president's family runs a crypto business** *CNBC, 8 April 2025 (Blanche memo)*

DOJ watchdog passes off investigation into case of Olympian who was charged in Reflecting Pool case

Washington Examiner RIGHT § *10:50 EDT*

The Justice Department’s inspector general has declined to investigate the handling of the case against David Hearn, a former Olympic athlete accused of damaging the Lincoln Memorial Reflecting Pool, prompting his lawyers to call for an independent review of alleged misconduct by federal officials. The department’s internal watchdog said...

· Judge permanently blocks Jeanine Pirro from pursuing charges against former Olympian in Reflecting Pool vandalism case *from the morgue, 1 Oct 2026*

· Lawyers urge watchdogs to examine Reflecting Pool case against ex-Olympian *from the morgue, 6 Oct 2026*

· Former Olympian charged in Reflecting Pool vandalism case urges inspectors general to investigate prosecution *from the morgue, 6 Oct 2026*

· Another Trump DOJ Weaponization Ploy Implodes as Judge Permanently Ends Reflecting Pool Vandalism Case *from the morgue, 1 Oct 2026*

· Judge dismisses Reflecting Pool case against former Olympian with prejudice *from the morgue, 1 Oct 2026*

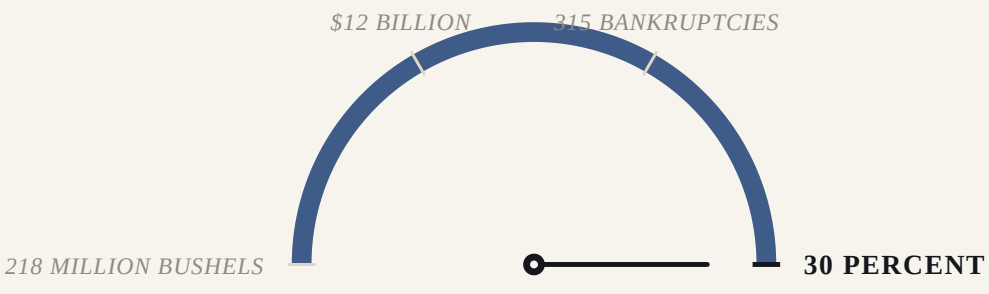
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§68 — 21 OCTOBER 2026

On winning

BY LOU
The Word

DEMOCRAT



30 PERCENT

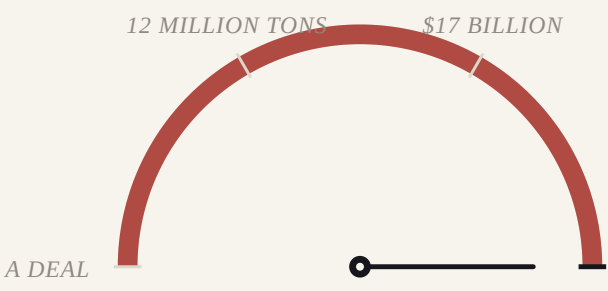
What it cost. From January through August 2025, U.S. soybean exports to China totaled 218 million bushels, against 985 million in the same months of 2024 [1]. In December the Agriculture Department announced $12 billion in aid, $11 billion of it Farmer Bridge Assistance, paying soybean growers $30.88 an acre [2]. Chapter 12 farm bankruptcies reached 315 in 2025, up from 216 the year before, a 46 percent rise [3].

And the income line. USDA projects 2026 net farm income at $158.4 billion, down 2.6 percent, or 5.5 percent after inflation [4]. Direct government payments are forecast at $47.4 billion, up nearly 70 percent — about 30 percent of net farm income [5]. The promise was that farmers would get tired of winning. Nearly a third of what they take home now arrives as a check from Washington.

SOURCES

1. "From January through August 2025, U.S. soybean exports to China totaled just 218 million bushels, down sharply from 985 million bushels in 2024" — American Farm Bureau Federation, 2 October 2025 ↑
2. $12 billion in aid: $11 billion in Farmer Bridge Assistance and $1 billion for specialty crops and sugar; soybeans at $30.88 per acre — American Farm Bureau Federation, 8 December 2025 ↑
3. Chapter 12 farm bankruptcies: 315 in 2025, 216 in 2024, up 46 percent — American Farm Bureau Federation, 9 February 2026 ↑
4. 2026 net farm income forecast at $158.4 billion, down 2.6 percent (5.5 percent inflation-adjusted) — USDA Economic Research Service, 3 September 2026 ↑
5. Direct government payments of $47.4 billion, up nearly 70 percent, about 30 percent of net farm income — American Farm Bureau Federation, 3 September 2026 ↑

REPUBLICAN



WINNING

The promise, at a rally in The Woodlands, Texas, in June 2016: Americans would win so much they "are gonna get sick of it" [1]. For farmers, the administration's best receipts are the deals with China. Beijing met its pledge of 12 million metric tons of U.S. soybeans by January [2]. In May the White House announced China would "purchase at least $17 billion per year of U.S. agricultural products in 2026 (prorated), 2027, and 2028" [3].

That is a real case. A trade war is supposed to end in purchases, and there are purchases, on paper and in the ports. A farmer who sold into China again this spring can say something came of it. What it cost to get there, and who covered the difference, is on the other side.

SOURCES

1. Americans "are gonna get sick of it" — rally in The Woodlands, Texas — CBS News, 18 June 2016 ↑
2. China reached its pledge to buy 12 million metric tons of U.S. soybeans — Farm Policy News, citing Reuters, January 2026 ↑
3. China to "purchase at least $17 billion per year of U.S. agricultural products in 2026 (prorated), 2027, and 2028" — White House fact sheet, 17 May 2026 ↑

“My brother-in-law has a farm, a small one, soybeans mostly, and he keeps his papers in a coffee can. January through August 2024: nine hundred eighty-five million bushels to China. Same months in 2025: two hundred eighteen. Then a letter about the aid — thirty dollars and eighty-eight cents an acre for soybeans. Then the bankruptcy figures he reads every February, and he doesn't like reading them: three hundred fifteen, up from two sixteen. Sorry — I know you're busy. He's supposed to be sick of winning. What part of the coffee can is the winning?” — Lou

🍺

“So much winning you'd get sick of it, he said. The soybean farmers got sick first: two hundred eighteen million bushels to China through August of last year, down from nine hundred eighty-five. Then twelve billion in aid, then farm bankruptcies up forty-six percent, and this year government checks are about thirty percent of what a farm takes home. That's not winning. That's a subscription.”

— Sal

🚬

“The farmers are winning so much that the government has to send them checks to help them cope with all the winning, which is thirty percent of their income, which is thirty percent more winning than they had before.”

— Chip

The Word today — 👍 👎