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Executive Insight Brief

July 21, 2023

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View From The Hill



Lawmakers continued their busy July work period by welcoming Israeli President Isaac Herzog to address a joint session of Congress, showcasing America's support of Israel remains a steadfastly bipartisan issue. The lead-up to the address, however, was not without some [intra-party drama](#) among House Democrats.

Legislatively, the House passed its bipartisan reauthorization of the Federal Aviation Administration, which included provisions to raise the mandatory retirement age for commercial pilots from 65 to 67. Notably, an [amendment](#) adding seven additional long-haul flights at Washington's Reagan National Airport was defeated. This controversial policy debate has pitted DC-area Congressional delegations against their colleagues, as well as Delta Air Lines against rivals United, American, and Alaska. The fight now moves to the Senate, as that chamber considers its own version of the bill.

The House Appropriations Committee passed two additional FY 2024 bills this week along party lines: [Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies](#) as well as [Transportation, Housing and Urban Development, and Related Agencies](#).

In an [effort](#) to break a months-long blockade on military promotions by Senator Tommy Tuberville (R-AL) over the Pentagon's abortion policy, Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer (D-NY) has offered up a vote to repeal the policy which provides paid leave to servicemembers seeking an abortion. If this fails to move the needle for Tuberville, Schumer has indicated he may delay the start of the Senate's beloved August recess in order to muscle through key promotions procedurally. Meanwhile, the Senate did manage to [vote](#) to advance consideration of its version of the National Defense Authorization Act for FY 2024, with passage slated as early as next week.

Aerospace & Defense

[F-35 delivery delays to cost Lockheed hundred of millions in 2023 \(Defense News\)](#)

Problems with the F-35 Joint Strike Fighter's newest upgrades will cause the aircraft's manufacturer to miss its 2023 delivery goal by up to roughly 50 jets, Lockheed Martin officials said Tuesday. The delays could bring down Lockheed's revenue for 2023 by hundreds of millions of dollars. Lockheed originally planned to deliver between 147 and 153 fighters this year. But software problems with the upgrades known as Technology Refresh 3, or TR-3, are causing significant delays. The Pentagon announced in June that it would not accept newly built F-35s with TR-3 until the upgrades are completely ready. Lockheed CEO Jim Taiclet said in an earnings call with investors Tuesday that the company now expects to deliver 100 to 120 F-35s this year, given the TR-3 software issues. TR-3 is the program's name for a package of upgrades that are intended to give the F-35 better displays, computer memory and processing power, and is necessary before a more extensive modernization known as Block 4 can be added. Block 4 will allow the F-35 to carry more long-range precision weapons, improved electronic warfare capabilities and better target recognition.

[Top Republican blocks Biden's AUKUS pact in bid for more defense dollars](#)

[Menendez maintains holding Turkey F-16 jet despite Sweden NATO deal \(Defense News\)](#)

A key senator is refusing to lift his longstanding hold on the sale of 40 Block 70 F-16 fighter jets to Turkey despite the Biden administration's announcement last week that it wants to move forward with the deal. The \$20 billion potential sale also includes 80 modernization kits. National security adviser Jake Sullivan said the sale would proceed last week after President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan announced at the NATO summit in Lithuania that Turkey would ratify Sweden's NATO accession bid. But Sen. Bob Menendez, D-N.J., told Defense News on Tuesday that he continues to use his position as Foreign Relations Committee chairman to block the sale. The U.S. State Department has held conversations with Menendez on his F-16 hold in recent weeks. Menendez told Reuters last week that if the Biden administration "can find a way to ensure that Turkey's aggression against its neighbors ceases, which there has been a lull the last several months, that's great but there has to be a permanent reality."

[Future of the F-15E and more in the balance as Senate starts NDAA debate](#)

[U.S. Deploys advanced F-35 jets, destroyer to Middle East to brush back Iranian forces \(The Wall Street Journal\)](#)

The U.S. is sending F-35 jet fighters and a Navy destroyer to the Middle East to bulk up its forces following a series of challenges by Iranian and Russian forces in the region, U.S. officials said Monday. The U.S. is already using F-16 fighters and A-10 attack planes to fly armed patrols in the Persian Gulf to deter Iran from attempting to seize oil tankers. The

deployment of the additional forces, which will include more F-16s, follows Iranian attempts earlier this month to seize two commercial oil tankers in the Strait of Hormuz. The Iranians backed away after the U.S. dispatched a guided-missile destroyer to the scene. But Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin decided that additional forces were needed to strengthen the U.S. position. The U.S. military presence in the Middle East is a fraction of the American force deployed there during the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, because the Pentagon has sought in recent years to shift its strategic focus toward China and Russia. But Iranian actions, including its recent threats to shipping in the Persian Gulf, have prompted the Pentagon to temporarily shift forces back to the Middle East.

Budget & Appropriations

[GOP-backed defense bill won't pass, national security adviser says \(Politico\)](#)

National security adviser Jake Sullivan was emphatic that the version of the National Defense Authorization Act that passed the House last week will never make it to President Joe Biden. "This legislation is never getting to the president's desk," Sullivan said on CNN's "State of the Union." "Because what you have seen from an extreme group of Republicans is to put forward a set of amendments that try to mix domestic social debates with the needs, the security needs of our nation". By a vote of 219-210, the House voted Friday to approve an \$886 billion NDAA bill that included measures to block Pentagon policies that reimburse travel costs for troops seeking abortions, to end coverage of transition surgeries and hormone treatments for transgender troops, to gut diversity and inclusion programs, and to limit the specific flags that can be flown at military installations. But the current bill is not expected to make it through the Democratic-led Senate intact.

[GOP Senator threatening to hold up NDAA over credit card fees](#)

[Schumer looks to swat down 'toxic' issues that could torpedo Pentagon bill \(Politico Pro\)](#)

The Senate's top Democrat is urging both parties to reject proposals that could tank annual defense policy legislation, days after the Republican-led House passed its own version loaded with far-right amendments targeting abortion and diversity programs. Majority Leader Chuck Schumer made the plea as the Senate gears up to consider its version of the National Defense Authorization Act this week, which he and other leaders aim to pass before Congress leaves for its August recess. The push from Schumer comes after Speaker Kevin McCarthy and House Republicans narrowly passed a defense bill last week that rolls back Pentagon abortion access policies, surgeries and hormone treatments for transgender troops, and diversity programs in the military. Nearly all Democrats opposed the legislation. Much of the major work this week will occur behind closed doors as Democratic and Republican leaders wrangle over which bipartisan amendments to include

in a package of uncontroversial proposals and which contentious measures should receive votes. Abortion and other issues may surface, but Democrats are warning that attempts to roll back the Pentagon's policies are a dealbreaker.

[Limits on NATO withdrawal added to Senate NDAA as votes get underway](#)

[Senate defense bill grants US training assistance to Kosovo \(Defense News\)](#)

The Senate's draft annual defense bill would add Kosovo to the list of eastern European countries eligible for U.S. military training amid heightened tensions in the Balkans. The fiscal 2024 National Defense Authorization Act, which the Senate is slated to begin debating this week, allows Kosovo to engage in U.S.-led military exercises to increase interoperability with NATO forces. Doing so would allow Kosovo to receive reimbursements for training via multilateral military exercises with NATO and NATO Partnership for Peace members, a list of countries that includes its rival Serbia. As a NATO Partnership for Peace member, Serbia regularly hosts the Platinum Wolf military exercises with the U.S. and its NATO allies and intends to do so again this year amid its acrimony with Kosovo. The report also notes that the Senate Armed Services Committee "supports expanding cybersecurity cooperation" with the Kosovar armed forces, directing Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin to brief Congress on efforts to do so by the end of the year.

Advanced Technologies

[The Biden Administration announces a cybersecurity labeling program for smart devices \(NBC News\)](#)

The Biden administration and major consumer technology players on Tuesday launched an effort to put a nationwide cybersecurity certification and labeling program in place to help consumers choose smart devices that are less vulnerable to hacking. Officials likened the new U.S. Cyber Trust Mark initiative — to be overseen by the Federal Communications Commission, with industry participation voluntary — to the Energy Star program, which rates appliances' energy efficiency. Amazon, Best Buy, Google, LG Electronics USA, Logitech and Samsung are among industry participants. Devices including baby monitors, home security cameras, fitness trackers, TVs, refrigerators and smart climate control systems that meet the U.S. government's cybersecurity requirements will bear the "Cyber Trust" label, a shield logo, as early as next year, officials said. FCC Chairwoman Jessica Rosenworcel said the mark will give consumers "peace of mind" and benefit manufacturers, whose products would need to adhere to criteria set by the National Institute of Standards and Technology to qualify.

[Seafloor drone garages? Italy weighs new tech to protect vital cables](#)

[Google tests A.I. tool that is able to write news articles \(The New York Times\)](#)

Google is testing a product that uses artificial intelligence technology to produce news stories, pitching it to news organizations including The New York Times, The Washington Post and The Wall Street Journal's owner, News Corp, according to three people familiar with the matter. The tool, known internally by the working title Genesis, can take in information — details of current events, for example — and generate news content, the people said, speaking on the condition of anonymity to discuss the product. One of the three people familiar with the product said that Google believed it could serve as a kind of personal assistant for journalists, automating some tasks to free up time for others, and that the company saw it as responsible technology that could help steer the publishing industry away from the pitfalls of generative A.I. Jenn Crider, a Google spokeswoman, said in a statement that “in partnership with news publishers, especially smaller publishers, we’re in the earliest stages of exploring ideas to potentially provide A.I.-enabled tools to help their journalists with their work.”

[SpaceX launches 15 Starlink satellites to orbit, lands rocket at sea \(Space.com\)](#)

[Microsoft is giving out free cybersecurity tools after an alleged Chinese hack \(CNN\)](#)

Microsoft is offering free cybersecurity tools to some government and commercial customers following criticism of the tech giant's handling of a major alleged Chinese hack that compromised US government email accounts. Starting in September, Microsoft cloud computing customers won't have to pay extra money to get access to critical data to help them spot cyberattacks, Microsoft said Wednesday. The Wall Street Journal first reported on Microsoft's policy change. The move comes after cybersecurity officials privately expressed frustration that Microsoft had not done enough to detect the alleged Chinese cyber-espionage campaign, according to US officials. The campaign hit two-dozen organizations and became public last week. The State Department says it detected the cyber activity in June and reported it to Microsoft. The email accounts of Commerce Secretary Gina Raimondo and State Department officials were breached in the activity, CNN has reported. The free tools announced on Wednesday “will enable incident response teams, regardless of license level, to conduct more complete investigations,” Sean Koessel, a vice president at Volexity, told CNN.

Military Installations & Communities

[Congress OKs troop bonus funds, but space HQ might stall other items \(Defense News\)](#)

House Armed Services Committee Chairman Mike Rogers, R-Ala., this week approved several Pentagon budget reprogramming requests related to troop pay, after a delay forced the Air Force to suspend some bonuses. However, Rogers told Defense News he will still hold up numerous other reprogramming requests to protest the Air Force's failure to make a long-overdue decision whether to base U.S. Space Command headquarters in Colorado or his home state of Alabama. Military Times first reported last week the House Armed Services Committee's delay in approving a routine reprogramming request for the Pentagon to shift funds between accounts was forcing the Air Force to postpone some permanent change of station moves, selective reenlistment bonuses and other cash incentives for airmen. The Alabama and Colorado congressional delegations are engaged in an increasingly acrimonious fight over the Space Command basing decision amid the Air Force's refusal to make an expeditious decision.

[Guard "temporarily" pauses some student loan repayment due to funding](#)

[Improvement projects on the horizon at Niagara Falls Air Reserve Station \(Stars and Stripes\)](#)

Niagara Falls Air Reserve Station is expecting some new additions to help improve efficiency for the 914th Air Refueling Wing. Currently, a new piping system is being installed underneath tarmac where KC-135 stratotanker aircraft can fuel up faster without the need for fuel trucks. The hydrant fuel lines will have six spots for aircraft to all get filled up at once. Contractors from Mark Cerrone Inc. have been at work on the project since last summer, also replacing lines at the petroleum, oil and lubricants yard before replacing and installing new pipes this summer. They plan to complete the project by next summer. The piping system will be used by 914th aircraft only, as the 107th Attack Wing does not have any aircraft stationed at the base. KC-135s are able to carry up 33,000 gallons of fuel, with the trucks used to fuel them able to carry 6,000 gallons each. Further down the line, the base is also planning on a combined alert facility that the 914th and 107th can both use and extending the runway for military aircraft use.

[Many military families are struggling financially. They could soon get a big pay hike.](#)

[Deputy Defense Secretary discusses shipyard upgrades, Red Hill \(Military.com\)](#)

Ambitious modernization efforts at Pearl Harbor Naval Shipyard and getting an update on Red Hill defueling efforts were at the top of the agenda of a recent visit by U.S. Deputy Defense Secretary Kathleen Hicks, who visited Oahu to tour facilities and hold meetings with senior military leaders and members of Hawaii's congressional delegation. In March the Navy awarded a \$2.8 billion contract to Honolulu-based joint venture Dragados /

Hawaiian Dredging/Orion JV to replace Dry Dock 3 with the yet-to-be built Dry Dock 5.

Homeland Security

[Immediate actions to address the China-Cuba axis at America's doorstep \(The Hill\)](#)

For years, Americans believed the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) was a faraway and unlikely threat. That illusion was shattered this year, first with the spy balloon that traversed our skies and again last month after numerous reports that the CCP threat is at our door, just 90 miles from U.S. shores on the island of Cuba. New revelations of Chinese spy stations, military bases and troop deployments in this communist island have rattled policymakers, exposing America's vulnerability to a new Cuba crisis. In a joint statement, Senate Intelligence Committee Chairman Mark Warner (D-Va.) and Vice Chairman Marco Rubio (R-Fla.) called the China-Cuba axis a "serious threat to our national security and sovereignty." Americans should be alarmed by the threat that the island of Cuba would again serve as an unsinkable aircraft carrier for an enemy determined to achieve global supremacy. Many Americans remember the Cold War with the Soviet Union, but few realize that this new Cold War 2.0 with China will be more dangerous because China is a much more advanced enemy, with an economy and military capabilities almost equal to those of the United States. The China-Cuba axis will bring real dangers to our doorstep and give China irreversible leverage over the hemisphere. This requires the U.S. to take action before it's too late.

[Ex-NSA executive considered for nomination as Cyber Director](#)

[Democrats press Homeland Security on domestic extremism in workforce \(The Washington Post\)](#)

More than 65 Democrats in Congress sent a letter Monday asking what steps the Department of Homeland Security has taken to weed out domestic extremists within its ranks after reports concluded that more than 300 current or former DHS employees were members of the right-wing Oath Keepers group as of 2015 and Customs and Border Protection staff were working with conservative militia groups on the U.S.-Mexico border. The letter addressed to DHS Secretary Alejandro Mayorkas comes more than two years after he launched an internal review of how to handle potential threats posed by such employees in agencies including the Transportation Security Administration, Immigration and Customs Enforcement and the Secret Service. In March 2022, a working group of senior DHS officials found the department had "significant gaps that have impeded its ability to comprehensively prevent, detect, and respond to potential threats related to domestic violent extremism within DHS." The report found that DHS had no official definition of or guidance about what constitutes a violent extremist, no workforce training to identify and report extremist activity, and insufficient funding for the already existing DHS Insider Threat Program.

[U.S. blacklists spyware companies, citing security threats](#)

[Blinken calls blockade on diplomatic nominees a national security risk \(The New York Times\)](#)

Secretary of State Antony J. Blinken called on the Senate to quickly confirm more than three dozen State Department nominees, charging that delaying tactics employed by Republican senators seeking leverage on unrelated issues were “undermining national security.” Mr. Blinken’s comments reflect growing alarm in the Biden administration about Republican moves to block nominees across the government, including at the Defense Department and the Justice Department. Mr. Blinken said that 38 presidential nominees for State Department posts had completed hearings and been approved by the Senate Committee on Foreign Relations but were being denied confirmation votes by the full Senate. Among them are would-be ambassadors to several countries where the United States has critical interests, including the United Arab Emirates, Ethiopia and Jordan, as well as the State Department coordinator for counterterrorism. “These delays are undermining our national security,” Mr. Blinken told reporters during an unusual appearance at the State Department’s daily news media briefing. The overwhelming majority of the stalled State Department nominees are career diplomats, and more than a third have been awaiting votes for about a year or more, he added.

Transportation & Infrastructure

[NYC Subway using AI to track fare evasion \(NBC News\)](#)

Surveillance software that uses artificial intelligence to spot people evading fares has been quietly rolled out to some of New York City’s subway stations and is poised to be introduced to more by the end of the year, according to public documents and government contracts obtained by NBC News. The system, which the city and its transit authority haven’t previously acknowledged by name, uses third-party software that its maker has touted as a way to engage law enforcement to help crack down on fare evasion. The system was in use in seven subway stations in May, according to a report on fare evasion published online by the Metropolitan Transit Authority, which oversees New York City’s public transportation. The MTA expects that by the end of the year, the system will expand by “approximately two dozen more stations, with more to follow,” the report says. The report also found that the MTA lost \$690 million to fare evasion in 2022. Joana Flores, an MTA spokesperson, said the AI system doesn’t flag fare evaders to New York police, but she declined to comment on whether that policy could change.

[These are America's best states for infrastructure, making daily life reliable](#)

for residents

[House GOP seeks billions in cuts to rail, water infrastructure spending \(The Washington Post\)](#)

It took decades for Congress to deliver on its promise to pour new money into the nation's roads, bridges, pipes, ports and internet connections. Now, House Republicans are trying to slash some of the same funds. A series of GOP bills to finance the federal government in 2024 would wipe out billions of dollars meant to repair the nation's aging infrastructure, potentially undercutting a 2021 law that was one of Washington's rare recent bipartisan achievements. The proposed cuts could hamstring some of the most urgently needed public-works projects across the country, from improving rail safety to reducing lead contamination at schools. Some of the cuts would be particularly steep: Amtrak, for example, could lose nearly two-thirds of its annual federal funding next fiscal year if House Republicans prevail. That includes more than \$1 billion in cuts targeting the highly trafficked and rapidly aging Northeast Corridor, which runs between Boston and Washington, prompting Amtrak's chief to sound early alarms about service disruptions. But the effect would be the same: The GOP bills would reduce the federal money available for repairs. The cuts would come at a time when the country is grappling with the real-life consequences of its own infrastructure failures, from train derailments in Ohio and Pennsylvania to the collapse of a key portion of Interstate 95 in Philadelphia last month.

[Amtrak unveils \\$130M infrastructure improvement plan for Northeast corridor](#)

[House overwhelmingly passes bill to improve air travel \(The New York Times\)](#)

The House on Thursday overwhelmingly passed bipartisan legislation to reauthorize the Federal Aviation Administration for the next half-decade, moving at a time of growing dysfunction and disruption in the system to make a number of changes that affect passengers. The bill would address airlines' refunds and reimbursement obligations to passengers, enhance protections for passengers with disabilities, boost hiring of air traffic controllers, shore up aviation safety, unlock funding to modernize airport infrastructure, invest in upgrades to the agency's technology and more. The House passed it on a vote of 351 to 69, sending it to the Senate. A number of sticking points had threatened to hold up a final agreement, including disputes over proposed changes to a pilot training rule and an increase to their mandatory retirement age. Republicans and the airline industry largely oppose new regulations proposed by Democrats and aimed at strengthening consumer protections. The House also approved a bipartisan amendment that would maintain the current standards for pilot training, blocking a proposal supported by Representative Sam Graves, the Missouri Republican who leads the Transportation and Infrastructure Committee, that faced opposition in the Senate.

Biotechnology & Healthcare

[Biden's HIPAA expansion for abortion draws criticism, lawsuit threats \(Politico\)](#)

The Biden administration's effort to wield the nation's premier health-privacy law to protect abortion rights is under fire from Republicans who accuse the president of overreaching — and from Democrats who call it too weak. The Department of Health and Human Services is preparing to release a final rule later this year that would expand the protections of the decades old Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act, or HIPAA, with the aim of shielding people who seek, obtain or provide abortions from red state probes — one of the most concrete steps the administration has taken to defend abortion rights since the Supreme Court ended *Roe v. Wade* a year ago. There is “absolutely” a potential for legal challenges, said Roger Severino, who served as the head of HHS' Office for Civil Rights under former President Donald Trump and is now vice president of domestic policy at the Heritage Foundation. Dozens of top Democrats in the House and Senate, meanwhile, say the draft rules are inadequate for a post-*Roe* environment in which Republican-controlled states are seeking to more aggressively target abortion providers and anyone who helps a patient circumvent state restrictions.

[An innovation supply chain: Pfizer taps flagship for 10-program pipeline pact worth \\$7B in biobucks](#)

[Johnson & Johnson sues Biden Administration over Medicare drug price negotiations \(CNBC\)](#)

Johnson & Johnson on Tuesday sued the Biden administration over Medicare's new powers to slash drug prices, making it the third pharmaceutical company to challenge the controversial provision of the Inflation Reduction Act. The lawsuit filed in federal district court in New Jersey argues the Medicare negotiations violate the First and Fifth Amendments of the U.S. Constitution. Earlier suits brought separately by drugmakers Merck and Bristol Myers Squibb, as well as by the U.S. Chamber of Commerce and PhRMA, the pharmaceutical industry's largest lobbying group, made similar arguments. J&J's complaint asks a judge to block the U.S. Health and Human Services Department from compelling the drugmaker to participate in the program. President Joe Biden's Inflation Reduction Act, which passed in 2022 by a narrow party-line vote, empowered Medicare to negotiate drug prices for the first time in the program's six-decade history. The provision aims to make drugs more affordable for older Americans but will likely reduce pharmaceutical industry profits.

[FDA approves new treatment to prevent RSV in infants](#)

[Biden urged to tackle medical debt beyond credit cards \(Roll Call\)](#)

The Biden administration's investigation into medical credit cards has drawn praise from consumer groups, but they want it to move quickly — and more broadly — to address the issue of medical debt. About 20 percent of Americans have medical debt, according to the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau. The issue has garnered increased attention as health care costs continue to rise, providers get criticized for questionable billing practices and insurers get blamed for denying coverage and raising copays and deductibles. The Biden administration is trying to address the issue in part by targeting medical credit cards, which have been around for decades but are becoming more prolific as more providers promote them in their offices as a way to pay for care and out-of-pocket costs not covered by insurance. More than 11 million cardholders use CareCredit — the most popular medical credit card — and 250,000 providers and health facilities accept it, according to the company. Users say it helps them pay for care they might not be able to receive otherwise. The Biden administration worries that the cards typically come with high interest rates that are deferred for a certain period of time known as a “promotional period.” But if patients can't pay a bill during that period — or forget to — they get hit with the interest on the full amount.

Climate & Development

[Kerry's trip to China yields no breakthrough on climate \(Politico\)](#)

The United States and China failed to reach new climate agreements despite “productive” conversations, special climate envoy John Kerry said Wednesday after a four-day visit to Beijing, an outcome that underscores the tensions between the world's two biggest carbon polluters and economies. Kerry said the hours of closed-door meetings with senior Chinese officials revealed “things we clearly agreed on,” with both sides committing to regular meetings, including one in the next few weeks. He still expressed hope of achieving breakthroughs that could keep the planet from experiencing disastrous climate change. Even without any immediate breakthroughs, the fact that the two sides committed to regular conversations represents a substantial step in restoring trust between the two countries at a time when overall relations are at their modern nadir, veterans of international climate diplomacy said. But neither Kerry nor his Chinese counterpart, Xie Zhenhua, has the final say on climate policy in their respective countries. Chinese President Xi Jinping ultimately decides policy in Beijing, while Kerry's boss — President Joe Biden — faces limits imposed by federal courts increasingly skeptical toward executive actions and congressional Republicans who oppose the administration's climate policies.

[Phoenix breaks city record with 19 consecutive days of 110-degree heat](#)

[The biggest winners in America's climate law: foreign companies \(The Wall Street Journal\)](#)

The 2022 climate law unleashed a torrent of government subsidies to help the U.S. build

clean-energy industries. The biggest beneficiaries so far are foreign companies. The Inflation Reduction Act has spurred nearly \$110 billion in U.S. clean-energy projects since it passed almost a year ago, a Wall Street Journal analysis shows. Companies based overseas, largely from South Korea, Japan and China, are involved in projects accounting for more than 60% of that spending. Fifteen of the 20 largest such investments, nearly all in battery factories, involve foreign businesses, the Journal's analysis shows. These overseas manufacturers will be able to claim billions of dollars in tax credits, making them among the biggest winners from the climate law. The credits are often tied to production volume, rewarding the largest investors. Japan's Panasonic, one of the few companies to publicly estimate the impact of the law, could earn more than \$2 billion in tax credits a year based on the capacity of battery plants it is operating or building in Nevada and Kansas. Forecasters estimate the climate law could unleash some \$3 trillion in total clean-energy investments over the next decade.

[Canada's wildfires blacken thousands of square miles, upend lives](#)

[EF3 Tornado rips through North Carolina amid extreme weather nationwide \(ABC News\)](#)

A powerful tornado ripped through central North Carolina for more than a dozen miles on Wednesday, destroying homes and injuring residents, according to officials. The National Weather Service said early Thursday that a preliminary damage survey indicates the tornado was an EF3, with peak winds up to 150 miles per hour. It's the first EF3 tornado ever observed in central North Carolina in the month of July and the strongest twister for this time of year on record in the state. The National Weather Service currently uses the Enhanced Fujita scale to rate tornado intensity based on wind speeds and the severity of the damage caused. The scale has six intensity categories from zero to five (EF0, EF1, EF2, EF3, EF4 and EF5), representing increasing wind speeds and degrees of damage. The 600-yard-wide tornado touched down Wednesday afternoon at around 12:30 ET near Dortches, a tiny town in North Carolina's Nash County, just outside the city of Rocky Mount. While on the ground, the tornado snapped power poles, uprooted trees and damaged buildings. Multiple mobile homes in the Dortches area were completely destroyed and removed 20 to 30 yards from their foundations. Farther northeast, a residence building suffered major damage as all exterior walls collapsed with only interior walls and a brick fireplace still standing.

Next Week's Hearings

Armed Services Committees

House: None Listed

Senate: None Listed

Appropriations Committees

House: None listed

Senate: None listed

Homeland Security Committees

House: None listed

Senate: None listed

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