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Executive Insight Brief

November 3, 2023

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Notable Headlines

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Worth reading: [US and Switzerland sign Patriot Advanced Capability 3 missile contract](#)

View From The Hill



It was the first full week on the job for newly minted House Speaker Mike Johnson (R-LA), who [managed](#) to squeak through a full-year Legislative Branch Appropriations bill with bipartisan support. The fight over a supplemental funding request from the White House, however, continued with Speaker Johnson moving forward with plans to consider Israel and Ukraine aid separately—a nonstarter with most Democrats and against the preference of Senate Republican Leader Mitch McConnell (R-KY). The Speaker sought to offset the \$14.5 billion in funding for Israel aid by cutting funding to the Internal Revenue Service (IRS), though the Congressional Budget Office (CBO), which is the official scorekeeper of what legislation will cost the American taxpayer, [said](#) that the proposed offset would ultimately increase the federal government's budget deficit in the long run. The House [voted](#) on the Israel-only supplemental Thursday evening, with votes on Interior and Environment, Transportation, and Housing and Urban Development bills slated for next week. It remains unclear how Congress will come to agreement on moving supplemental funding for both Israel and Ukraine, while border security funding remains mired in contention over Republicans' [demands](#) for stricter border policies.

Despite tremendous acrimony among Members on both sides of the aisle, the House [voted](#) to table motions to censure Representatives Marjorie Taylor Greene (R-GA) and Rashida Tlaib (D-MI) and opted—for now—not to expel Rep. George Santos (R-NY) over his many lies and multiple federal indictments. In what is widely seen as a loss for the institution, House Appropriations Chairwoman Kay Granger (R-TX), who has served since 1997 and was the first Republican woman elected to Congress from Texas, [announced](#) she would not run for reelection after her current term expires in 2025. Conservative firebrand Ken Buck (R-CO) also announced his retirement from Congress, citing his party's election denialism.

Over in the Senate, Majority Leader Chuck Schumer (D-NY) [managed](#) to pass a minibus spending bill, which includes full-year appropriations for military construction, as well as the Departments of Veterans Affairs, Transportation, Agriculture, and Housing and Urban Development. The Senate also [confirmed](#) former Treasury Secretary Jack Lew to be the permanent U.S. Ambassador to Israel in a bipartisan vote. Republican national security

hawks [unleashed](#) on their own Sen. Tommy Tuberville (R-AL) on the Senate Floor over his continued obstruction of expedited consideration of military promotions due to the Pentagon's abortion policies. Led by Senators Dan Sullivan (R-AK) and Joni Ernst (R-IA), Republicans spent hours on Wednesday night reading off credentials of various senior military officers awaiting promotion, as, each time, Sen. Tuberville objected to unanimous consent on the promotions. Despite this, the Senate voted overwhelmingly to confirm Adm. Lisa Franchetti to lead the Navy, making her the first woman to serve on the Joint Chiefs of Staff. This marks the first time since July that there are no vacancies in the Joint Chiefs. The Senate also confirmed Gen. David Allvin as Air Force chief of staff and Lt. Gen. Christopher Maloney to serve as the Vice Commandant of the Marine Corps.

Aerospace & Defense

[Navy takes early steps with Australian, UK vendors on shared sub work \(Defense News\)](#)

The U.S. Navy is beginning to integrate its industrial base with those of Australia and the United Kingdom, despite Congress not yet passing several measures to enable the trilateral submarine-building arrangement AUKUS. AUKUS will bring about the sale of American submarines to Australia and the development of a new AUKUS-class design, but U.S. Navy Under Secretary Erik Raven recently told lawmakers the agreement goes beyond acquisition programs. "It is about fundamentally changing and integrating three industrial bases in different parts of the world to produce maximum effect to serve our mutual national security efforts," Raven said, noting such efforts are already underway. Rear Adm. Scott Pappano, the program executive officer for strategic submarines, recently told Defense News at an additive manufacturing summit in Danville, Virginia, that the Columbia-class ballistic missile submarine program is tightly linked to its British counterpart, the Dreadnought program.

[Putin signs bill revoking nuclear test ban treaty](#)

[Israel uses F-35I to shoot down cruise missile, a first for Joint Strike Fighter \(Breaking Defense\)](#)

The Israel Defense Forces said that it used F-35I Adir fighter jets to shoot down a cruise missile this week, the first known cruise missile intercept by the American-made stealth fighter. "In recent days, a cruise missile launched from the southeast toward Israeli airspace was detected by the IAF's control and detection systems. After tracking the cruise missile's trajectory, Adir fighter jets were scrambled and successfully intercepted the missile," the IDF said today, while releasing video of the incident. The cruise missile was likely launched from the Iran-backed Houthis in Yemen, although the IDF did not specify the launch site. While Israeli did not specify what weapon was used to intercept the incoming cruise missile, Israel's F-35I variants are armed with both the AIM-9X Sidewinder and Aim-120

AMRAAM missiles.

[Seoul believes North Korea sent Russia over a million artillery shells](#)

[Third F-15EX Aircraft Notches First Flight \(Aviation Week\)](#)

Boeing has completed the first flight of the third F-15EX ordered by the U.S. Air Force, moving the program closer to a first aircraft delivery since April 2021. The flight on Oct. 27 from the Boeing factory at the St. Louis Lambert International Airport comes two and a half months after the third F-15EX rolled off the assembly line. Boeing delivered two F-15EX fighters between March and April 2021 to get flight testing off to an early start. Both aircraft had been diverted to the U.S. Air Force from a production stream of F-15QAs ordered by Qatar. Accordingly, the third F-15EX to enter flight testing is the first originally built to match the specifications for the U.S. order, which includes the BAE Systems Eagle Passive Active Warning Survivability System. The Air Force currently plans to order a total of 104 F-15EXs, but the final number could grow. The original plan called for buying 144 F-15EXs to replace a portion of the F-15C/D fleet, which are now being retired.

Budget & Appropriations

[Speaker Johnson says Ukraine aid 'will come next,' eyes pairing with border security \(The Hill\)](#)

Speaker Mike Johnson (R-La.) on Thursday said the House will consider Ukraine aid “in short order,” while reiterating that he wants to pair funding for Kyiv with U.S. border security. The comment came after Johnson split Ukraine aid from funding for Israel, a move that frustrated lawmakers on both sides of the aisle. He has said Congress “cannot waste any time” moving the \$14.3 billion Israel package. The White House unveiled a roughly \$100 billion supplemental request last month that includes funding for Ukraine, Israel, border security and allies in the Indo-Pacific, but some Republicans have objected to combining funding for Kyiv and Tel Aviv. Asked during a press conference Thursday how he intends to handle future Ukraine aid, which has been a point of contention within the House GOP conference, Johnson responded, “Ukraine will come in short order; it will come next.” “And you’ve heard me say that we want to pair border security with Ukraine, because I think we can get bipartisan agreement on both of those matters,” he added.

[Fed Holds Rates Steady and Pledges to Proceed Carefully](#)

[House GOP looking at new twist to stopgap funds fight \(Roll Call\)](#)

Speaker Mike Johnson said Thursday that Republicans are considering a new approach to

stopgap funding that would extend pieces of current appropriations for different time periods, effectively setting up a series of funding cliffs while avoiding a single deadline that could trigger a partial government shutdown for all agencies. With current funding for the entire government set to expire on Nov. 17, Johnson has proposed a CR to extend funding through Jan. 15, though that date is the federal Martin Luther King Day holiday. But the Louisiana Republican said at a press conference some GOP members raised the idea of a “laddered CR” to extend funding on a piecemeal basis. “I’ll unpack for you what that means here in the coming days, but potentially you would do a CR that extends individual pieces of the appropriations process, individual bills,” Johnson said. “We’ll see how that goes. I think we can build consensus around it.”

[Retailers expect holiday sales to rise despite economic headwinds](#)

[McConnell, Speaker Johnson divide sharply on year-end strategy \(The Hill\)](#)

New Speaker Mike Johnson (R-La.) at a meeting with the Senate GOP conference Wednesday laid out his stark differences with Senate Republican Leader Mitch McConnell (R-Ky.) over key elements of the year-end strategy, signaling the challenges the two leaders face in the weeks ahead. Johnson rejected McConnell’s arguments, made in private and public, that U.S. aid to Israel should be tied to military aid to Ukraine, security assistance for Taiwan and provisions to boost security along the U.S.-Mexico border. The Speaker insisted to GOP senators that Israel aid will have move separately from Ukraine funding, arguing that it couldn’t otherwise pass the House. But Johnson threw a bone to McConnell, Congress’s leading Republican proponent of supporting the war in Ukraine, by pledging to GOP senators that he would bring a separate Ukraine aid package to the House floor after House lawmakers approve an Israel-only bill later this week.

Advanced Technologies

[Bipartisan House duo looks to extend quantum tech legislation \(Nextgov\)](#)

A bill reauthorizing the National Quantum Initiative Act is set to be introduced this Friday by Reps. Frank Lucas, R-Okla. and Zoe Lofgren, D-Calif. — the chair and ranking member of the House Committee on Science, Space, and Technology, respectively. The legislation, which extends support for quantum research and development through fiscal year 2028, focuses on global competition and expanding the scope of research to push quantum technology applications into modern use cases, according to a draft of the bill obtained by Nextgov/FCW. First signed into law in 2018, the legislation authorized significant federal funding towards advancing quantum information sciences research and development in the U.S. It granted agencies — including the National Institute of Standards and Technology, the National Science Foundation, and Department of Energy — with new programming to support more advanced applications research.

[OMB tells agencies to name chief AI officer to accelerate tech adoption across government](#)

[Army gets first high-power microwave prototype to counter drone swarms \(Defense News\)](#)

Epirus has completed initial government acceptance testing of its high-power microwave prototype meant to counter drone swarms, the company said in a Nov. 1 statement. The prototype system delivered to the U.S. Army is part of the service's effort to develop an Indirect Fire Protection Capability that will protect fixed and semi-fixed sites from drones as well as rockets, artillery and mortars and cruise missiles. The IFPC system will consist of a mix of hard-kill interceptors as well as a laser and a high-power microwave capability. The Army is also now receiving the first 12 IFPC launcher prototypes from Dynetics; these will head into operational tests in 2024. The IFPC-HPM, Epirus said, is a counter-unmanned aircraft system-swarm capability developed under a December 2022 contract awarded by the Army's Rapid Capabilities and Critical Technologies Office.

[Supreme Court ponders consequences of letting officials block critics on social media](#)

[Defense intelligence director voices support for a cyber-specific intel center \(Nextgov\)](#)

The U.S. intelligence community needs to prioritize its support for government-backed cyber activities, including exploring the development of a center dedicated to sharing collected information, Defense Intelligence Agency Director Lt. Gen. Scott Berrier said during a Center for Strategic and International Studies event on Wednesday. "I would say that we need to get our act together on intelligence support to cyber operations," Berrier said, adding that "DIA is not postured right now to deliver everything that we probably could." Given the number of military services underneath the Defense Department's umbrella, he voiced support for the development of "an intelligence center that supports cyber" and referenced the National Ground Intelligence Center and the National Air and Space Intelligence Center as examples of centralized centers that provide more targeted military assistance.

Military Installations & Communities

[Senate finally confirms Adm. Franchetti as Navy's top officer \(Military Times\)](#)

The Senate voted Thursday to confirm Adm. Lisa Franchetti as the Navy's 33rd chief of naval operations, ending a months-long delay due to Republican Sen. Tommy Tuberville's ongoing blockade of military nominations due to his opposition to Defense Department

abortion access policies. Franchetti became not only the first woman to serve as the Navy's top officer, but the first to serve on the Joint Chiefs of Staff. While Franchetti was confirmed around 12:50 p.m. local time, it remains to be seen when hundreds of lower-ranking military nominations will get a vote. Those still waiting to be confirmed include Adm. Samuel Paparo to lead U.S. Indo-Pacific Command and Vice Adm. James Kilby to receive a fourth star and become vice chief of naval operations. Vice Adm. Stephen Koehler has also been nominated to become a four-star admiral and become the next vice chief of naval operations.

[Meet one of the few airmen to ever hit 10,000 flying hours](#)

[The Army Suddenly, and Chaotically, Told Hundreds of Soldiers They Have to Be Recruiters Immediately \(Military.com\)](#)

Without warning, hundreds of noncommissioned officers were ordered via email to report to the recruiting school at Fort Knox, Kentucky, in less than a week, with hundreds more set to start at the school in December -- a sudden unexpected move by the Army as the service scrambles to boost its recruiting force by 800 by the end of the year. The orders came after a breakdown in how the Army tracks how many recruiters it has coming through the pipeline along with retention of existing ones, according to Lt. Gen. Douglas Stitt, the Army's top personnel officer. The sudden depletion of recruiters caught Army planners flat-footed, with officials unable to provide a clear explanation as to what went wrong. Now, NCOs will likely have to move during the holiday season and in the middle of the school year, sowing chaos for families.

[Air Force Commander at Kunsan Air Base Stepping Down and Retiring After Just 5 Months on Job](#)

[DOD Launches New Landing Page to Celebrate National Veterans and Military Families Month \(DoD\)](#)

This November, the Defense Department is launching a 2023 National Veterans and Military Families Month landing page on Military OneSource. The new, easily-accessible page is part of the Department's recognition of the national observance month, which celebrates the sacrifices and contributions of service members, veterans and military families. The page displays a wide range of resources and support for military families and transitioning veterans, signaling the Department's priority to take care of service members and families, officials stated. Page features include information about: Parenting, Adoption and foster care, Relationships, Caring for a family member with special needs, Resources for gold star and surviving family members, Financial support, Spouse employment, and Consultations for transitioning veterans."Our nation's service members and transitioning veterans do not – and did not – serve alone.

Homeland Security

[Biden calls for 'pause' in Israel's war in Gaza for the first time \(Al Jazeera\)](#)

President Joe Biden has voiced support for a humanitarian “pause” to Israel’s war in Gaza as the United States presses to evacuate all Americans trapped in the besieged Palestinian enclave. “I think we need a pause,” Biden said during a campaign speech on Wednesday, after being interrupted by a protester who urged for an immediate ceasefire. When asked what a pause meant, Biden said it was “time to get the prisoners out” – a reference to the captives held by Hamas, the group that rules Gaza, the White House later clarified. The US president’s remarks marked a shift in the position of the White House, which has previously said it would not dictate how Israel conducts its military operations. “We’re not drawing red lines for Israel,” White House spokesperson John Kirby said last week. “We’re going to continue to support them.” On Friday, the US was one of only 14 countries in the United Nations to vote “no” to a resolution in the General Assembly calling for a “ceasefire”.

[To solve national security problems, the US may have to rethink higher education](#)

[Pending defense agreement would let U.S. troops use bases in Finland \(Washington Times\)](#)

After negotiations lasting more than a year, Washington and Helsinki are close to signing a defense cooperation pact that would allow U.S. troops access to military bases in Finland and set up storage depots for American weapons, vehicles and other equipment. The move to strengthen U.S.-Finnish relations gained new urgency following Russia’s invasion of Ukraine in February 2022. Finland and Russia share an 830-mile border, and the conflict swung the Nordic country’s public support in favor of joining NATO. It became a member of the alliance this past April. “The (U.S.-Finnish) negotiations were held in a collaborative spirit. The draft agreement will now proceed to the political process,” Mikael Antell, deputy director general at Finland’s Foreign Ministry, said in a statement. Concluding the Defense Cooperation Agreement with the U.S. was one of the objectives laid down by Finnish Prime Minister Petteri Orpo’s government. It must now go to Finland’s Parliament for ratification.

[Statement from Secretary Mayorkas on President Biden’s Executive Order on Artificial Intelligence](#)

[DHS to lean further into AI with generative pilots \(Federal News Network\)](#)

The Homeland Security Department will continue its aggressive lean into artificial intelligence. As early as Friday, DHS is expected to detail its plan for several generative AI pilots focused on the mission areas. Eric Hysen, the agency's chief information officer and first chief AI officer, said he's spending about half of his time on AI issues with a focus on a how best to use and accelerate the technology to support mission areas. "We view that we need to give our employees the tools they need to do their jobs. Our workforce is incredibly talented and incredibly passionate, and the workload that we have across DHS only gets larger every single day so when you look over the last several years, the number of new challenges that our workforce has taken on is truly incredible. So when we see a technology that has the potential to make our workforce more productive, we're going to seize that. But we're going to do that in a deliberate and appropriate way," Hysen said after his panel at the ImaginationNation ELC 2023 conference sponsored by ACT-IAC.

Transportation & Infrastructure

[Speaker Johnson Eyes Defense Bill Negotiations \(Transport Topics\)](#)

Tucked in the House and Senate bills are provisions mandating the Department of Defense to greenlight certain standards for accessing military installations around the country. A report accompanying the Senate defense bill sought to explicate the trucking provision: "The committee notes that there is no universal access standard across the services, which can lead to project delays for military construction projects, facilities repairs and household good moves. The measure, which includes a variety of updates to military, energy and environmental programs, is guaranteed to reach the president's desk for enactment. Wrapping up the bill's consideration is a priority for senior policymakers."

[Space Force awards \\$2.5 billion in rocket contracts to SpaceX and ULA for 21 launches](#)

[Biden administration investing \\$653M in ports to improve supply chains, keep costs down \(The Hill\)](#)

The Biden administration announced on Friday morning that it is investing more than \$653 million to fund port projects with the goal of improving U.S. supply chain reliability. The projects through the Department of Transportation's Maritime Administration will focus on 41 ports nationwide, including at the Port of Long Beach, Port of Milwaukee and Port of Newark. The funding comes from the bipartisan infrastructure law, which included nearly \$17 billion overall in funding for ports and waterways. "These investments will help expand capacity and speed up the movement of goods through our ports, contributing to cleaner air and more good-paying jobs as we go," Transportation Secretary Pete Buttigieg said in a statement. Buttigieg told reporters that the funding is a good thing for Americans looking for the price of goods to "go down and stay down." And he said the funding will lead to improvements in goods flowing through ports, improvements to keep shipping costs down,

and a decrease in pollution at ports breathed in by workers and neighbors.

[Tampa International Airport tests electric air taxi for first time](#)

[Aerospace small businesses urge Congress to address inflation \(Transportation Today\)](#)

Members of the Aerospace Industries Association (AIA) are urging Congress to address inflation, an economic reality impacting small businesses and suppliers in the aerospace and defense industries. In a letter to leaders in the House and Senate last week, the AIA said the most important step Congress can take to help companies is to fully fund the government through full-year appropriations and not continuing resolutions. “As you know, inflation is a national challenge affecting businesses across the country. Costs for manufacturing inputs remain persistently high – in some cases, the prices of parts and materials are 100 to 200 percent over normal levels,” the letter reads. “Inflation is also creating delivery delays, driving up costs even further. Small businesses are being particularly hard hit by rising costs and associated uncertainty.”

Biotechnology & Healthcare

[CDC outlines first plan to address widespread health worker burnout \(Axios\)](#)

A new first-of-its-kind federal campaign targeting widespread burnout in the health care workforce aims to make it easier for providers to get mental health care without fear it could jeopardize their careers. The new plan from a division of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention comes amid heightened scrutiny of the routine practice of asking workers in high-stress professions about their mental health. Experts say these questions have created widespread barriers to seeking help. Most recently, an incident involving an Alaska Airlines pilot who was charged with trying to bring down a flight spotlighted the challenges pilots face if they seek mental health help. Professional organizations like the American Medical Association have called for state medical licensing bodies and health systems to remove questions on applications that might deter physicians from seeking treatment for a mental illness or substance use disorder.

[White House orders HHS to collect reports on healthcare AI safety](#)

[Ady Barkan, activist who fought for US healthcare overhaul, dies aged 39 \(Guardian\)](#)

Ady Barkan, an attorney and healthcare activist whose journey with motor neuron disease prompted a fight to overhaul the US healthcare system, has died at the age of 39 from complications with amyotrophic lateral sclerosis (ALS). Barkan’s wife, Rachael Scarborough King, announced his death in a post to X, formally known as Twitter. “You probably knew Ady as a healthcare activist. But more importantly he was a wonderful dad

and my life partner for 18 years,” wrote King. “Ady fought for the 24/7 care he needed to be home with us until the end of his life,” King added, thanking Barkan’s caregivers and “their labor and care, which allowed us to live as a family through Ady’s health challenges”. “Everyone should have that chance,” she said. Barkan was first diagnosed with ALS in 2016 at the age of 32, the healthcare advocate wrote in a 2022 piece for the Guardian. The progressive degenerative illness targets nerve cells in the spinal cord and the brain. The disease is often terminal, with those diagnosed usually having a three to five year survival rate.

[Injectable tissue prosthesis to aid in damaged muscle/nerve regeneration](#)

[NASA, Defender to test motion sickness gel in new trials \(Fierce Biotech\)](#)

NASA and Defender Pharmaceuticals will test an anti-nausea gel in two clinical trials, recruiting astronauts to undergo motion simulation exercises to test sensorimotor performance. The two partners are collaborating on the phase 2 clinical trial of the St. Louis-based drugmaker’s anti-nausea gel that targets motion sickness and enhances sensorimotor performance such as keeping balance and executing fine motor skills like writing and other movements. The first of the trials for Defender’s DPI-386 (intranasal scopolamine gel) is a randomized, double-blind, placebo-controlled, crossover investigation that compares motion sickness symptom severity and time to severe malaise in 30 subjects, age 18 to 65, who will be exposed to simulated wave motion on a platform inside of a crew capsule mock-up, the company said in an Oct. 24 press release.

Climate & Development

[Southern California wildfire forces 4,000 residents to evacuate homes \(CNBC\)](#)

Roughly 4,000 residents in Southern California have been ordered to evacuate their homes due to a raging fire in the small town of Aguanga in Riverside County, which spread further overnight. Dry brush ignited Monday afternoon, causing a fire that was initially just 14 acres and was classified as spreading at a “moderate rate,” according to the Riverside County Fire Department. In the evening, it was reclassified as a “critical rate” spread and had grown to more than 1,200 acres. The cause of the fire is under investigation. On Monday, 1,139 homes near the area were ordered to evacuate, equating to about 4,000 people, according to Maggie Cline De La Rosa, a spokesperson for the county fire department. The flare-up, dubbed the Highland Fire, destroyed three structures and damaged six others. The fire department has yet to identify what kind of structures they are. By Tuesday morning, the fire expanded to 2,200 acres. More than 300 firefighters have been assigned to respond to the uncontained blaze. A care center is open at a local high school for evacuated residents.

[Biden-Harris Administration Announces \\$1.3 Billion to Build Out Nation's Electric Transmission and Releases New Study Identifying Critical Grid Needs](#)

[Business group estimates several hundred thousand clean energy jobs in EV, battery storage and solar \(AP News\)](#)

A nonpartisan business group that advocates for clean energy estimates that 403,000 jobs will be created by the 210 major energy projects announced since the Inflation Reduction Act took effect in mid-2022. At least \$86 billion in investments have been announced, with the biggest job gains in expected in the electric vehicles, battery storage and solar energy sectors, said the report issued Wednesday by Environmental Entrepreneurs (E2). The IRA, signed August 2022, contains \$500 billion in new federal spending to lower healthcare costs, increase tax revenues and address climate change by offering incentives so clean tech companies innovate and manufacture in the U.S. "We're in the biggest economic revolution we've seen in generations thanks to the Inflation Reduction Act and other clean energy policies," said E2 executive director Bob Keefe.

[Maine public-power vote could shape new course for utilities](#)

[EU, US, COP28 hosts rally support for global deal to triple renewable energy, documents show \(Reuters\)](#)

The European Union, United States and the United Arab Emirates' COP28 climate summit hosts are rallying other governments to join a global deal to triple renewable energy this decade at the upcoming summit, documents shared with Reuters showed. The countries are working to recruit others to sign the pledge ahead of this year's annual U.N climate negotiations, which take place from Nov. 30 to Dec. 12 in Dubai, with a likely launch event at a gathering of world leaders at the start of the summit, a U.S. State Department spokesperson told Reuters. In a draft letter being sent to other governments, the countries said tripling the world's renewable energy capacity - to have 11,000 gigawatts installed by 2030 - is the most important thing they can do to limit global warming to 1.5 degrees Celsius and avoid its most disastrous impacts. "We have the solutions at hand, and we have already made huge strides in expanding the global renewable energy capacity and becoming more energy efficient," said the letter, seen by Reuters.

Next Week's Hearings

Armed Services Committees

House: None listed

Senate: None listed

Appropriations Committees

House: None listed

Senate: Wednesday, November 8, 2023, 9:00am EDT: "[A Review of the President's Supplemental Request for the Departments of Health and Human Services and Homeland Security](#)"

Homeland Security Committees

House: None listed

Senate: Wednesday, November 8, 2023, 9:30am EDT; "[The Philosophy of AI: Learning History. Shaping our Future](#)"

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