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Subject: [EXTERNAL] Executive Insight Brief

Ladies & Gentlemen,
Below please find this week's edition of *Executive Insight Brief* from The Roosevelt Group.

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Executive Insight Brief

November 15, 2024

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Notable Headlines

- [EU approves first-ever funding for joint weapons, ammo procurement](#)
- [The exact thing that helped Trump win could become a big problem for his presidency](#)
- [The Biden economy is about to get a new salesman: Donald Trump](#)
- [Will Elon Musk and Vivek Ramaswamy's new 'department' actually be able to do anything?](#)
- [How RFK Jr. could cause an earthquake for American public health](#)

Worth Reading: [‘Terrifying’: Trump’s Cabinet picks trigger unease in Europe](#)

View From The Hill



After a six week recess for campaign season, Congress returned to Washington this week amidst an officially-clinched GOP [majority](#) in both the House and Senate. The first weeks back after an election is all about the politics behind the politics: leadership elections. In the House, all but one Member from the existing republican leadership will be [returning](#) to their roles in January, due to their colleagues rewarding them for guiding the party to victory and succeeding in retaining the majority. The exception, of course, is the current House GOP Conference Chair, Rep. Elise Stefanik (R-NY), who is being tapped by

President-elect Trump as U.S. [ambassador](#) to the United Nations. Her leadership vacancy will be filled by Rep. Lisa McClain (R-MI), who beat out Rep. Kat Cammack (R-FL) for the role. Democrats will hold their House leadership elections the week of November 19th. The next angling that will occur will be lawmakers jostling for plum committee assignments to maximize their influence and relevance in the 119th Congress.

One concern facing House republican leadership is that the President-elect keeps announcing nominations from within the ranks of the GOP's already-slim majority. Other than Stefanik, Trump announced that he intends to nominate now-former Rep. Matt Gaetz (R-FL) to be [Attorney General](#) and Rep. Mike Waltz (R-FL) to be his [National Security Advisor](#). Gaetz, facing the prospect of a House Ethics Committee investigation report being released, immediately resigned his seat. The announcement of Gaetz's nomination, as well as his sudden resignation, sent shockwaves through Washington.

The major story in the Senate this week was the race to replace longtime Senate Republican Leader Mitch McConnell (R-KY), who is stepping down after holding the position since 2007. Senators John Cornyn (R-TX) and John Thune (R-SD) have long been vying for the role, spending years quietly working behind the scenes to shore up support and goodwill amongst colleagues and awaiting the eventual end to McConnell's historically long tenure. A third contender, Sen. Rick Scott (R-FL), emerged as a favorite on the right and was seen as the candidate most likely to depart from Senate leadership norms. Following a secret ballot among his colleagues, Sen. Thune [emerged](#) victorious, with Scott receiving relatively scant support.

In a positive development for House Speaker Mike Johnson (R-LA), Members of the hardline House Freedom Caucus agreed to raise the threshold for the now-infamous Motion to Vacate from the current ability of a single Member to offer the measure to requiring a minimum of nine signatories. This will make it much easier for Speaker Johnson to avoid the threat and fate of former Speaker Kevin McCarthy (R-CA), who was ousted a few months into his tenure.

Aerospace & Defense

[Iran Using Fake 'Dream Job' Offers in Cyber Attacks on US Allies](#)

An Israeli cybersecurity firm, ClearSky, has reported that Iranian government-linked hackers have been targeting key individuals in the aerospace, aviation, and defense sectors of U.S. allies—including Israel, the UAE, Turkey, India, and Albania—by using fake job offers on LinkedIn in a campaign known as the "Iranian Dream Job." The hackers,

posing as recruiters from fictitious employers, distribute malware to access victims' systems and steal sensitive information, with ClearSky identifying the responsible group as TA455 (UNC1549), linked by Mandiant to Iran's Revolutionary Guard Corps. This tactic echoes similar methods by North Korean hackers, particularly in targeting cryptocurrency sectors, which ClearSky suggests may either be intentional mimicry by Iranian actors or an indication of shared methods. These cyber threats are an increasing concern for U.S. security agencies, especially with the approach of the 2024 presidential election. Recently, the Justice Department unsealed indictments against [three Iranian nationals tied to the Revolutionary Guard](#) for attempting to hack into the accounts of U.S. officials, media members, and campaign associates, allegedly leaking information to influence political outcomes.

[Kongsberg wins biggest-ever missile contract from US Navy, Marines](#)

[USAF Will Withdraw A-10s from Final Overseas Base in Korea in 2025](#)

The U.S. Air Force will begin withdrawing its A-10 Thunderbolt II aircraft from Osan Air Base in South Korea, starting in January, with all 24 units to leave by September 2025. This move marks the end of the A-10's permanent presence in the Indo-Pacific and aligns with broader efforts to modernize the Air Force's force structure in the region. The Air Force is upgrading F-16 avionics on the Korean peninsula and recently transferred F-16s from Kunsan to Osan to create a "super squadron." Advanced fighters, including the F-35 and F-15EX, are being introduced at U.S. bases in Japan to bolster combat readiness against potential threats. The Air Force aims to fully divest its A-10 fleet, reallocating affected units to new missions or replacing them with advanced aircraft like the F-35 and F-16.

Advanced Technologies

[Pentagon announces new batch of drones for Replicator program](#)

The Pentagon unveiled a new round of aerial and maritime drones for Replicator, a massive effort to fast-track the delivery of unmanned weapons systems to the services. Included in the batch "are multiple drones from the Army's company-level small unmanned

aerial system, or UAS, program.” In a release the Pentagon said, “these will offer versatile weapons for the units in the field, useful for targeting or surveilling the enemy.” Replicator will also include Andruil’s Altius-600, a one-way attack drone on contract with the Marine Corps. Wednesday’s release marks the “second – and most specific – time the Pentagon has disclosed what systems it’s buying for the program.” The Pentagon said it considered 500 commercial firms for Replicator, awarding contracts to 30 companies. Another 50 are included as subcontractors.

[China unveils J-35A and other new fighters at Zhuhai Airshow](#)

[What Donald Trump’s win means for AI](#)

During President-elect Trump’s first time ChaptGPT had not yet been launched, and now AI is beginning to consume our world. There have been significant advances in the industry and it is unclear how a second Trump administration may approach the space. Trump has people on both sides of the issue with Elon Musk voicing concerns about AI’s “existential risks”, while his Vice President, JD Vance sees warnings “as a ploy to usher regulations that would entrench the tech incumbents.” The first policy Trump is likely to make will be to repeal Joe Biden’s Executive Order on AI. The order signed in 2023, “sought to address threats the technology could pose to civil rights, privacy, and national security, while promoting innovation, competition, and the use of AI for public services.” Trump had promised to repeal the order during the campaign and it was confirmed in the Republican Party platform this July. While some aspects of the Executive Order are bi-partisan in nature there are aspects aimed more at democratic policy. It is possible Trump may issue his own Executive Order on AI, but with competing voices within the incoming White House, it cannot be certain what that may look like.

Military Installations & Communities

[Army awards contract to build new TNT production facility in Kentucky](#)

The U.S. Army has awarded a contract to REPKON USA-Defense LLC to establish a domestic TNT production facility in Graham, Kentucky, marking the first U.S.-based TNT production in decades. With a contract ceiling of \$425 million, the initiative aims to

enhance the resilience of the Army's munitions supply chain amid global uncertainties, as explained by Army acquisition chief Doug Bush. The facility, expected to take around 48 months to complete, is part of the Army's broader push to diversify and secure its sources for key components, particularly for 155mm artillery shells—a focus that intensified following the war in Ukraine. Maj. Gen. John Reim emphasized the facility's importance to the Joint Program Executive Office's mission to supply reliable and lethal munitions at a large scale, bolstering the U.S. defense industrial base.

[Trump picks ex-Georgia congressman Doug Collins for Veterans Affairs secretary](#)

[Military Recruitment: An Update, a New Approach and the Community's Role](#)

The U.S. military recently met its recruitment targets for the first time in years, yet challenges persist. To maintain momentum, the military is enhancing its recruitment efforts through skilled recruiters, data-driven marketing, and preparatory courses to help candidates meet qualifications. Alongside traditional community outreach, the services are building new partnerships with local influencers, especially in cities and suburbs with fewer military ties. Successful models, like Missouri's "Community Salute to Service" and Pittsburgh's Air Force partnership, show the potential of local advocates to increase recruitment by promoting military service as a valuable career path. These efforts aim to create "community champions" who can help bridge the gap between the military and civilian communities nationwide.

Homeland Security

[BILL SUMMARY: Homeland Security Fiscal Year 2025 Appropriations Bill](#)

The Fiscal Year 2025 Homeland Security Appropriations Act provides \$66.16 billion in total discretionary funding. The bill addresses urgent concerns such as improving border security and dismantling transnational criminal organizations trafficking in narcotics, firearms, and people. It also supports the US Coast Guard with \$12.6 billion to support their search and rescue efforts and mission, and includes \$2.9 billion to support

Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency (CISA) cyber infrastructure. It will bolster the economy by addressing work authorization backlogs and increasing capacity at ports of entry. The bill allocates over \$920 million for Customs and Border Protection (CBP) to improve the detection and seizure of fentanyl and other narcotics. Over \$22.3 billion is provided to FEMA's Disaster Relief Fund, along with \$3.7 billion in grant funding to help communities prepare for manmade and natural threats.

[Why Noem got the Homeland Security job](#)

[Homeland Security Department releases framework for using AI in critical infrastructure](#)

DHS released guidelines for the use of artificial intelligence in the power grid, water system, air travel network and other pieces of critical infrastructure. Secretary Alejandro Mayorkas hopes the framework will be "a living document" that can evolve as the industry does. The guidelines suggest AI developers evaluate their products for nefarious possibilities and ensure it aligns with "human-centric" values and protects the privacy of their users. It also requires AI developers to vet their suppliers of hardware and software to protect the security of their data centers. These guidelines were developed by DHS in consultation with the department's advisory Artificial Intelligence Safety and Security Board and would be required for private industry to adopt and implement.

Transportation & Infrastructure

[INVESTING IN AMERICA: USDOT Awards \\$1.2 Billion in Grants to Help State Departments of Transportation Utilize Cleaner Construction Materials](#)

The Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) has announced the award of \$1.2 billion to 39 State Departments of Transportation under the Low Carbon Transportation Materials Discretionary Grant Program. The investments support the continued growth of clean American manufacturing by improving competitiveness, creating good manufacturing jobs, and reducing pollution from production. The program seeks to catalyze demand for clean construction materials by providing States, Tribes, Metropolitan Planning Organizations, and other agencies with reimbursement and incentive funding to purchase American-made low carbon construction materials and products. This program received \$2 billion in funding

from the Inflation Reduction Act to help modernize our nation's infrastructure while mitigating the impact of climate change.

[Biden spurred new factories and infrastructure projects. Trump will be in office for the ribbon-cutting](#)

[New York races to revive Manhattan tolls intended to fight traffic before Trump can block them](#)

New York's Governor Kathy Hochul paused plans for a "congestion pricing" toll system, stating it was the wrong time to hit commuters and businesses with a \$15 toll. Now, she is hoping to establish a toll prior to President-elect Donald Trump's inauguration. Hochul's plan calls for a \$9 fee on most vehicles, and is intended to drive more people to use public transportation and fund the cash-strapped system. The congestion pricing fee would be the first of its kind in the US, but it has long existed in other major cities including London and Stockholm. The plan may face hurdles under the upcoming Trump administration since the Trump Tower penthouse would be within the congestion pricing zone. Trump has said he strongly disagrees with the plan.

Biotechnology & Healthcare

[AI method can spot potential disease faster, better than humans, study finds](#)

A new deep-learning artificial intelligence model can identify signs of diseases, or pathology, in images of tissue samples faster and more accurately than people. This breakthrough, developed at Washington State University, has potential to improve medical diagnoses by reducing the time it takes to detect cancer from a biopsy image in a few minutes, as opposed to several hours for a human pathologist. The AI deep learning model was trained using images from past epigenetic studies conducted at the university, they then tested it with new images, including studies with types of tissue the technology had not yet seen. The program not only correctly identified pathologies quickly but did so faster than previous models, and in some cases found instances that a trained human team had missed.

[Breast cancer vaccine update from Cleveland Clinic: ‘A new era’](#)

[Vaccine maker stocks fall as Trump chooses RFK Jr. to lead HHS](#)

Shares of vaccine makers fell Thursday following President-elect Donald Trump’s nomination of Robert F. Kennedy Jr., a prominent vaccine skeptic, to lead the Department of Health and Human Services. The stocks fell in the last hour of trading as reports emerged about the pick, with Moderna closing 5% lower, and shares of Novavax more than 6% lower. Health experts are concerned that the pick may elevate anti-vaccine rhetoric and deter more people from receiving Covid and routine vaccinations that save millions of lives and prevent debilitating illnesses. Kennedy has made false statements about vaccination safety, including the debunked claim that they cause autism, and he is the founder of the most well-funded anti-vaccine organization in the country.

Climate & Development

[COP29 host Azerbaijan hits out at West in defense of oil and gas](#)

The country of Azerbaijan is hosting this year’s UN Climate Summit, but its president is lashing out at the West and coming to the defense of oil and gas. During his keynote President Ilham Aliyev described his nation as “a victim of a well-orchestrated campaign of slander and blackmail.” Aliyev has labeled Azerbaijan’s oil and gas resources a “gift from god.” UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres took to the stage to express that doubling down on fossil fuels was an “absurd strategy.” However, the opposing views underscored the main challenge at the center of climate negotiations: “while nations are urged to shift to green energy sources, many, including wealthy Western nations, continue to rely on fossil fuels.” Aliyev called out the United States and the European Union accusing them of double standards. While the Biden administration has made some progress trying to decarbonize or apply fees to big oil and gas producers, much of his administration’s progress is likely to be scrapped by the incoming Trump administration.

[Kristi Noem rejected climate change and money to fight it](#)

[Exxon CEO wants Trump administration to keep US in Paris climate agreement](#)

Darren Woods, Exxon Mobil CEO, says that Trump should keep the United States in the Paris climate agreement instead of withdrawing from it for the second time. Woods said the country's shifting stances on the climate accord creates a difficult business environment. He continued saying, "I don't think the stops and starts are the right thing for business...it is extremely inefficient. It creates a lot of uncertainty." Trump formally removed the US from the agreement in 2020, and Biden put the US back in it when he took office in 2021. Exxon Mobil has supported the agreement since 2015. Woods said regardless if Trump decides to keep or remove the US from the accord, the way Exxon thinks about the future would remain unchanged. He said, "We don't let political agendas drive our business and investment decisions we make."

Next Week's Hearings

Armed Service Committee:

House: NONE

Senate: NONE

Appropriations Committee:

House:

- 11/19, 10:00 AM - National Institutes of Health
- 11/20, 10:00 AM - Assessing the Veterans health administration fiscal year 2025 potential shortfall

- 11/20, 10:00 AM - Investigating the crisis of missing and murdered indigenous women

Senate:

- 11/20, 10:00 AM - A review of disaster funding needs

Homeland Security Committee:

House:

- 11/19, 10:00 AM - Impacts of emergency authority cybersecurity regulations on the transportation sector
- 11/19, 2:00 PM - Trafficked, Exploited, and Missing: Migrant children victims of the Biden-Harris Administration
- 11/20, 10:00 AM - Worldwide threats to the Homeland

Senate:

- 11/20, 9:30 AM - Business Meeting
- 11/21, 10:00 AM - Threats to the Homeland



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