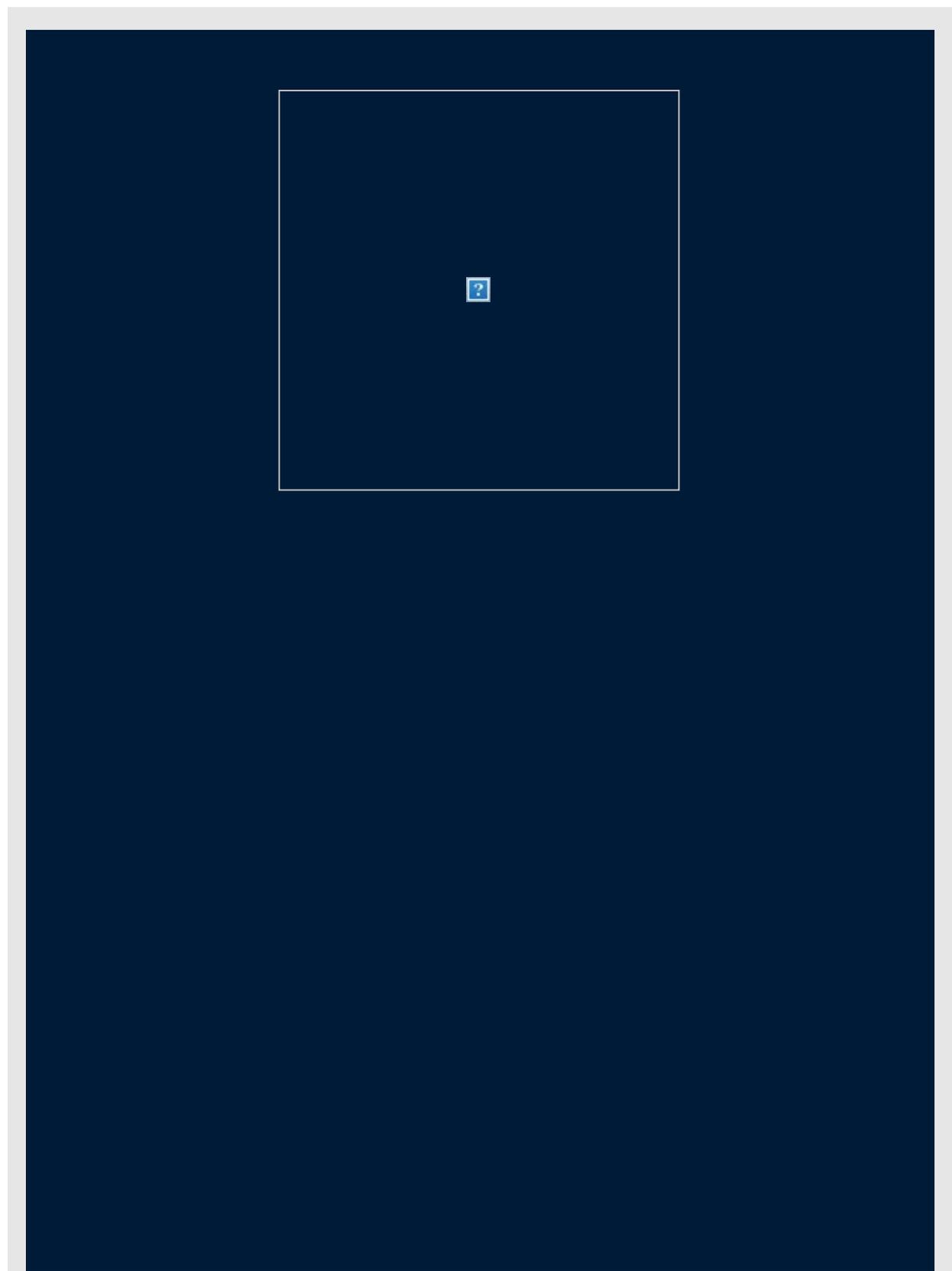


**From:** [The Roosevelt Group](#)  
**To:** [Ireland, Michelle](#)  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] Executive Insight Brief  
**Date:** Friday, February 14, 2025 8:04:02 AM

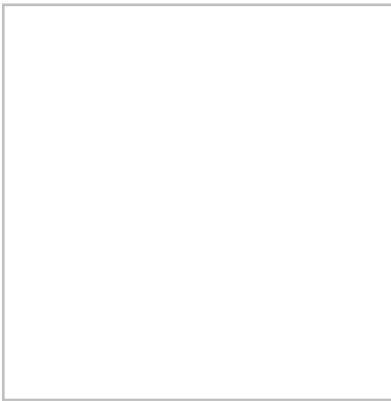
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# Executive Insight Brief

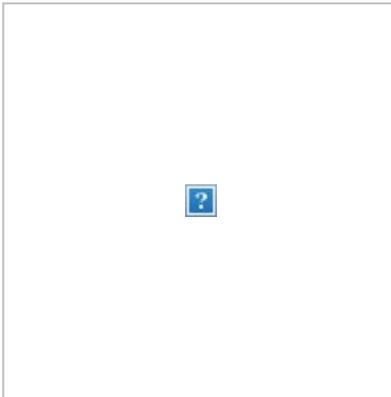
February 14, 2025

## Notable Headlines



- [Zelensky meets Vance as Ukraine says Russia hit Chernobyl nuclear plant](#)
- [Trump administration begins sweeping layoffs with probationary workers, warns of larger cuts to come](#)
- [Federal prosecutors in New York and Washington resign after refusing to drop Adams charges](#)
- [Judge orders US to restore funds for foreign aid programs](#)
- [Republicans defend USAID in hearing meant to criticize waste](#)

## View From The Hill



Budget reconciliation and government funding emerged as dominating themes on Capitol Hill this week, with divisions between House and Senate republicans, republicans and democrats, and among House republicans themselves playing out relentlessly. Having grown tired of waiting on the House to act, Sen. Lindsey Graham (R-SC), chairman of the Senate Budget Committee, [moved](#) the first of his two-bill strategy by passing a budget resolution authorizing committees to mark up \$150 billion in new defense spending and \$175 billion in border security spending, while pursuing steep spending cuts elsewhere. Graham has stated that he will also move another resolution aimed at extending and expanding the *Tax Cuts and Jobs Act* later, if the House ultimately fails to move a singular, larger legislative vehicle.

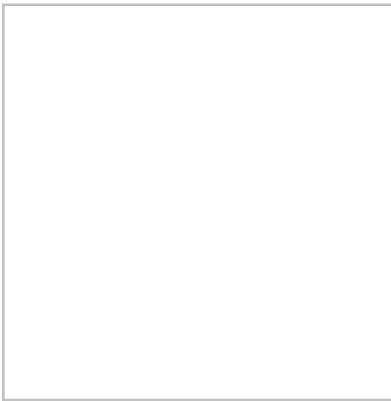
The House continued to struggle with coalescing around a strategy; however,

movement did begin by the tail end of the week when Rep. Jodey Arrington (R-TX), chairman of the House Budget Committee, was able to muscle through his own budget resolution in committee, after a [breakthrough](#) in negotiations among the House Freedom Caucus, GOP leadership, and other key Members. The House version seeks up to \$2 trillion in spending cuts to pay for hundreds of billions of dollars in new border and defense spending and other priorities. Much remains to be seen, however, as republicans in the House operate within the confines of their narrow majority and some moderate republicans continue to express concerns over the impact of deep cuts and limits to federal tax deductions for high state and local property taxes.

Back in the Senate, President Trump saw victory for several of his more controversial nominees. [Robert F. Kennedy Jr.](#) was confirmed to become the Secretary of Health and Human Services and former democratic [Rep. Tulsi Gabbard](#) was confirmed as Director of National Intelligence. Trump's nominee to lead the Federal Bureau of Investigation, Kash Patel, also saw his nomination [advance](#) out of committee and now awaits likely confirmation on the Senate Floor. Brooke Rollins was also [confirmed](#) to be the Secretary of Agriculture in an overwhelmingly bipartisan vote.

With current appropriations expiring one month from today, Congress is in a [race](#) against the clock to finalize any potential government funding agreement for the rest of the fiscal year. However, the leaders of the House and Senate Appropriations Committees are still hashing it out over top line spending numbers, meaning there is an increasing chance that the remainder of the fiscal year will need to rely on an additional Continuing Resolution, or, at least, another short-term stopgap will need to pass to find final agreement on a larger vehicle. And with House GOP and Democratic leadership already [trading](#) barbs over who is to blame for the lack of progress, any final deal appears elusive.

## **Pentagon News**



In a bold effort to reduce defense spending, President Donald Trump has directed Elon Musk and the “Department of Government Efficiency” (DOGE) to conduct an audit of the Pentagon, aimed at uncovering potential waste and fraud. Last fiscal year, President Biden approved an \$895 billion budget for the Defense Department, and the current administration is seeking to enhance financial accountability. Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth has [hinted](#) that the review will focus on reducing programs and capabilities that do not align with the country’s strategic competition with China. The administration insists that, by the end of Trump’s term, the Pentagon must pass a [clean audit](#)— a milestone the Pentagon has failed to achieve for seven consecutive years.

Some lawmakers and analysts have raised concerns about the potential risks of the audit, particularly regarding the handling of classified information and adherence to congressional oversight. “DOGE should not be given access to our nuclear secrets,” said [Sen. Ed Markey \(D-Mass.\)](#). “They haven’t been vetted, they don’t have top-secret clearance, and they should keep their hands off the nuclear weapons programs.” Additionally, questions have been raised about a possible conflict of interest, as Musk’s companies have received significant funding through Defense Department contracts. SpaceX, for example, has been awarded [\\$17 billion in federal contracts](#) since 2015, prompting scrutiny over whether his involvement in the audit presents an ethical concern.

Meanwhile, DOGE’s decision to dismantle USAID has ignited its own wave of criticism. Hegseth insists the move is unrelated to the Pentagon audit and has argued that USAID had deviated from an [“America first”](#) mission. “USAID is not the Defense Department,” he said. The reduction in USAID funding, an organization responsible for international aid, reflects a broader shift in U.S. foreign policy. Some view this as a move away from diplomatic and humanitarian initiatives, while others interpret it as a reassessment of government spending priorities.

In the FY25 NDAA, a strong emphasis was placed on improving the quality of life for

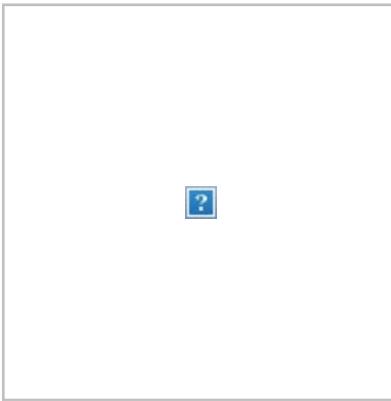
service members and their families. Service members across the board got a 4.5% increase, with junior enlisted troops seeing an additional 10%. Military families also saw boosts to medical care access, daycare opportunities, and military spouse assistance programs. While these increases are not yet finalized as FY25 appropriations bills are still outstanding, it's clear that improving quality of life is a continued priority. The House Armed Services Committee (HASC) is now focusing on [reforms to recruiting efforts](#) to bring more individuals into the services. Rep. Pat Fallon (TX-04), chairman of the HASC subcommittee on military personnel, said "Our greatest resource in the military is our personnel flat out, so we need to make sure we have great folks coming in." Recruitment numbers have steadily risen with all services announcing they had exceeded their recruitment goals in FY24. The Army reported recording breaking numbers in December 2024 with [350 recruits](#) enlisted daily.

Rep. Fallon plans to continue hearings on recruitment efforts and see what improvements can be made. His most ambitious proposal would guarantee citizenship for immigrants who serve in the military for six years—something military service has facilitated but never guaranteed. While the proposal may face hurdles in a deeply conservative Republican conference, Rep. Fallon will continue pushing for new recruitment and retention incentives in the FY26 NDAA. Work on the annual defense bill is expected to kick off at the end of February.

After stirring up controversy earlier this week, Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth [walked back](#) his remarks on Ukraine's peace deal, signalling that no concessions have been finalized. While initially asserting that Ukraine [would not join NATO](#) and rejecting the idea of peacekeeping troops, Hegseth softened his stance, leaving everything "on the table" when it comes to negotiations. This shift came just hours after a phone call between Presidents Donald Trump and Vladimir Putin about potential peace talks, which sent shockwaves through European allies who feared the U.S. was sidelining Ukraine.

European leaders were quick to express their concerns. EU diplomat Kaja Kallas [rejected any deal made behind Europe's back](#), while German and Lithuanian defense officials warned against making early concessions to Russia. Ukrainian President Zelenskyy also weighed in, emphasizing the need for a unified stance from Ukraine, Europe, and the U.S., before any talks with Putin could move forward. The debate over how to handle Ukraine's future is far from settled, with allies divided on how to proceed.

## Next Week's Hearings



**Armed Services Committee:**

**House:** NONE

**Senate:** NONE

**Appropriations Committee:**

**House:** NONE

**Senate:** NONE

**Homeland Security Committee:**

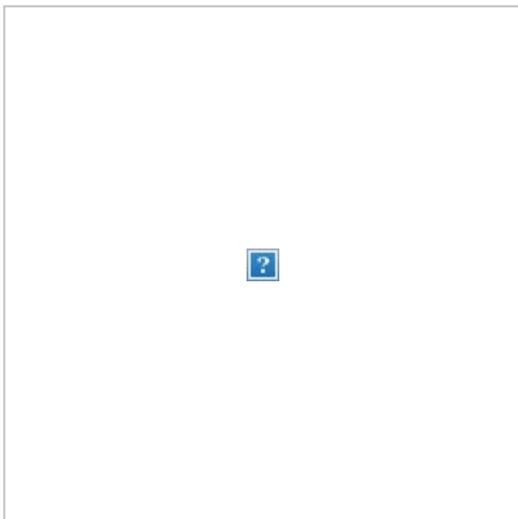
**House:** NONE

**Senate:**

- 2/20, 10:00 AM - Nomination Hearing for Troy Edgar to be Deputy Secretary of Homeland Security
- 2/20, 10:00 AM - Nomination Hearing for Dan Bishop to be Deputy Director of the Office of Management and Budget

**Other Nominations:**

- 2/19, 10:00 AM - Nomination Hearing for Lori Chavez-DeRemer to be Secretary of Labor (Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions)
- 2/20, Time TBA - Business meeting to consider the nomination of Linda McMahon to be Secretary of Education (Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions)



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