

Trump Transition Tracker

Updates as of 5 PM EST on Thursday, January 2, 2025.

Transition Updates

GOP trifecta ascends to power. The first phase of Republicans having total control of Washington comes tomorrow, January 3, when the new House and Senate are sworn in at noon. The GOP will control the Senate 53-47 and, for the first time since 2007, there will be a new Republican leading the caucus. Sen. John Thune (R-SD) takes over from Sen. Mitch McConnell (R-KY), who decided last year to step aside as leader at the end of the 118th Congress. Republicans also retained control of the House 220-215. However, with two GOP House members leaving for the Trump administration – Rep. Elise Stefanik (R-NY) and Rep. Mike Waltz (R-FL) – and Rep. Matt Gaetz’s (R-FL) resignation because of an ethics scandal, that margin will be even narrower until their seats are filled. All three seats are expected to remain Republican. The next phase of total Republican control will come when President-elect Donald Trump takes the oath of office for a second time on January 20.

To be, or not to be Speaker of the House. The pomp and circumstance of the first day of the 119th Congress could be overshadowed by the drama surrounding Rep. Mike Johnson’s (R-LA) bid to continue serving as Speaker. It is not clear how many Republicans remain angry enough to vote against Johnson over the deal he cut before Christmas to keep the government funded and running until March. The House cannot act until a Speaker is elected. This means it cannot assign committees, conduct hearings and investigations, or consider legislation. In 2023, it took four days and 15 rounds of voting for former Rep. Kevin McCarthy (R-CA) to be elected Speaker, which threw the House into utter chaos. While Johnson got a much-needed endorsement from Trump on December 30, it is not clear if it will be enough. However, Republicans also know the counting of the electoral votes is set to take place on January 6 and they don’t want to do anything to imperil that knowing how Trump would react. Click [here](#) for a Congressional Research Service report that provides a step-by-step look at the opening day of a new Congress.

Trump and the debt ceiling crisis. The U.S. debt ceiling has been reinstated, [raising concerns](#) that the world’s largest economy could default on its debt. Treasury officials have warned that extraordinary measures will soon be needed to prevent a default – a scenario that analysts have cautioned could destabilize the global economy. Despite Republicans controlling both the White House and Congress, finding a resolution remains challenging. The situation highlights the internal struggle that Trump and GOP leaders face in balancing the demands of hardline conservatives with the need for bipartisan cooperation, particularly with the looming risk of economic fallout. While Trump has proposed abolishing the debt ceiling altogether, a showdown over the debt ceiling could strain financial markets and put upward pressure on already elevated U.S. borrowing costs.

A sign of things to come. Elon Musk, Vivek Ramaswamy and Trump’s die-hard MAGA supporters are at odds over the use of [H-1B visas](#). Musk and Ramaswamy support the temporary nonimmigrant work permits designed to attract professional talent to the United States. Because the tech industry, particularly Silicon Valley, [grants](#) the most H-1B visas, the pair are advocating to admit more tech workers, arguing that the U.S. needs highly skilled workers to maintain its competitive edge in technology and innovation. This stance is causing some friction with longtime Trump allies like [Steve Bannon](#), who view H-1B visas as a “scam” that undermine American workers by allowing companies to hire lower-paid foreign workers instead. Over the holidays the debate reached a [fever pitch](#) with both sides aggressively attacking each other across all forms of media. Trump [ultimately sided](#) with Musk and Ramaswamy, saying he likes the program and has used it in his businesses. However, he may be confusing H-1B visas with H-2B visas since that is what he has primarily [used to hire temporary workers at his golf courses and resorts](#). This stance directly contradicts Trump’s 2016 campaign promise, when [he pledged](#) to end the H-1B program. This will not be the last time Trump will be forced to pick a side between wealthy advisors like Musk and the people who voted him into office who follow Bannon and other media influencers religiously. In the coming weeks, Trump’s ability to reconcile the differing interests among conservative budget hawks, MAGA lawmakers, and

more moderate Republicans – who may be vulnerable in the 2026 general elections – will dictate the fate of his aggressive legislative plans on immigration, budget trimming, and tax cuts.

PBMs in the crosshairs: Trump’s antitrust agenda. The incoming Trump administration is poised to [increase scrutiny](#) of Pharmacy Benefit Managers (PBMs) and health care mergers as rising health care costs remain a bipartisan priority. Health care entities are increasingly facing antitrust challenges, with both the Department of Justice (DOJ) and the Federal Trade Commission (FTC) expected to continue or resolve ongoing investigations into UnitedHealth Group and major PBMs. While the new administration could choose to continue, settle, or dismiss these cases, the momentum toward litigation will likely persist given Trump’s emphasis on fostering competition in the health care sector. Antitrust experts predict that the Trump administration will adopt a more traditional stance on health care regulation, prioritizing consumer and patient welfare. The future of the DOJ’s Task Force on Health Care Monopolies and Collusion, established in May to identify anti-competitive practices in the healthcare industry, will be of interest. While the duration and influence of such task forces can vary across administrations, many observers believe this initiative is unlikely to be dismantled. If the Trump administration follows through on its populist agenda to safeguard working-class interests, the fate of this task force will be a crucial indicator of its commitment to consumer protection in health care.

Trade, Tariffs & Investments

Section 301 investigation raises prospect of tariffs on China-made legacy chips. On December 23, Biden administration USTR Katherine Tai [initiated](#) a Section 301 investigation into China’s manufacturing of legacy semiconductors. In addition to unfair market practices, the investigation also will include how these components factor into downstream products in critical industries such as defense, automotive, and critical infrastructure. Despite the announcement, an investigation is likely to take a minimum of six months, meaning that the Trump administration will have to be the driving factor in instituting these tariffs if they go forward. In recent years, the Biden administration has focused on export controls blocking advanced U.S. semiconductors from being sold to China. This investigation signals a departure from the focus on high-end semiconductors – which China primarily imports from the U.S., Taiwan, and South Korea – to older model semiconductors, of which China is a major global supplier.

Regulation & Deregulation

House Select Committee on China to be renewed. The proposed House rules [package](#) for the 119th Congress extends the [House Select Committee on China](#) through December 2026. If the package passes, the stated objectives of the committee will largely remain the same, with the exception of an expanded investigative jurisdiction over “ideological threats” from the Communist Party of China on the U.S. and its allies.

Trump asks for time on TikTok. Just before the holiday, Trump [submitted](#) an amicus brief urging the Supreme Court to delay its judgment on the TikTok ban, for which oral arguments begin on January 10. Trump claims that he alone “possesses the consummate dealmaking expertise” to save the platform while simultaneously addressing the national security concerns expressed by the Biden administration. Notably, Trump did not take a stance on whether the ban itself was unconstitutional, implying that he favors TikTok slightly. While the judges are likely to seriously consider Trump’s request as the incoming president, they are unlikely to stray from their original timeline as any decision would likely come well after Trump’s inauguration.

Technology

Treasury hacked by Chinese. The Washington Post [reported](#) just before the New Year that the Treasury Department’s Office of Foreign Assets Control (OFAC) – which oversees U.S. sanctions enforcement – was hacked by a Chinese state-sponsored actor earlier in the month, with hackers gaining access to “certain unclassified documents.” Treasury has started jointly investigating the incident alongside the Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency (CISA) and the FBI, with the Trump transition team releasing a statement that they would be “committed to imposing costs on private and nation-state actors who continue to steal our data and attack our infrastructure.” Expect Congress to hold hearings as well.

Latest Trump Appointments

Ambassador to Panama

Kevin Marino Cabrera

Ambassador to Portugal

John Arrigo

Click [here](#) for an inventory of senior staff announcements. Ordered reverse chronologically by official [announcement](#).

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