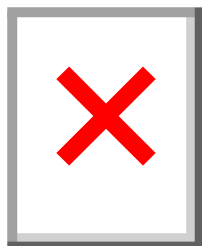


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Sent: Dec 03, 2024 18:09:20.000000000 UTC
Subject: Dems look for a way out of the wilderness
To: jperperian@cityofmelrose.org <jperperian@cityofmelrose.org>

Dec 03, 2024

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BY **ELI OKUN**

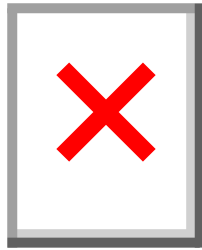


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THE CATCH-UP

SEOUL SEARCHING — The South Korean National Assembly voted to end emergency martial law imposed earlier in the day by President **YOON SUK YEOL**, capping a day of extraordinary developments that rattled the country and evoked scenes from its mid-century dictatorship. An NSC spokesperson [told reporters](#) that the U.S. is “seriously concerned” by the

turmoil, and that Yoon hadn't informed Washington of his plans ahead of time. [***Latest from the AP***](#)



Senate Democrats aren't shaking up their leadership, but there's more change underway in the rest of the party. | Francis Chung/POLITICO

LIFE OF THE PARTY — With Democrats about to be relegated to the political wilderness, the party is taking initial steps to fill out the class of leaders who will try to steer it back to power.

In the Senate, Dems are staying the course: As expected, they elected **CHUCK SCHUMER** to be caucus leader again, [***Ursula Perano and Anthony Adragna report***](#). The top ranks of his leadership team will be filled out by **DICK DURBIN** (Ill.) as whip, **AMY KLOBUCHAR** (Minn.) stepping into the No. 3 spot and **CORY BOOKER** (N.J.) in a newly created position of strategic communications committee chair. (Klobuchar will focus more on policy than messaging, but [***she was the one who rejected***](#) Schumer's suggestion to flash a thumbs up at the cameras today.)

All were chosen unanimously, in a signal of caucus confidence despite Dems losing the chamber. Sen. **CHRIS MURPHY** (D-Conn.) has also joined the lower ranks of leadership, [though he has no illusions about his power](#).

There's more change afoot in the House and especially in the party's broader political apparatus. A number of generational challenges for ranking member spots on key House committees will unfold in the coming weeks, some with knock-on effects for other panels: If Rep. **JAMIE RASKIN** (D-Md.) replaces Rep. **JERRY NADLER** (D-N.Y.) on Judiciary, Rep. **ALEXANDRIA OCASIO-CORTEZ** (D-N.Y.) could make a play for the top spot on Oversight, [Nick Wu and Jordain Carney report](#). That would be a big test of whether party leadership is open to a shakeup from a progressive who's challenged them, and Ocasio-Cortez may have competition for the slot.

Some moderate House Dems are signaling openness to working with the Trump administration: Rep. **JARED MOSKOWITZ** (D-Fla.) [became the first Democrat](#) to join the Congressional DOGE Caucus.

But the most significant competition to determine the party's future may be the race for DNC chair. Frontrunner **KEN MARTIN**, who currently leads the Minnesota state party, has a new memo that pitches a “massive narrative and branding project,” [Elena Schneider scooped](#). Martin wants Democrats to diversify their media approach, invest year-round in all 50 states and local organizing, and make state party chairs/executive directors full-time, salaried roles. But “it's light on details” for how to achieve the broader rebrand, Elena notes. [Adam Wren also has a breakdown](#) of the pros and cons of various declared and potential DNC chair candidates.

Outgoing Chair JAIME HARRISON isn't so down on the party's performance, noting that Dems outperformed incumbents in other countries and that American politics have been very swingy this century, [AP's Bill Barrow reports](#). Nonetheless, in an interview and a new memo, Harrison says the party has to improve its sales pitch to working-class people.

And the Democratic Lieutenant Governors Association today will tap Pennsylvania's **AUSTIN DAVIS** as its new chair. He [tells Brakkton Booker](#) that lieutenant governors can help the party rebuild and fill out its bench of diverse up-and-comers. Virginia's race next year is a particular focus, and Davis didn't rule out putting a finger on the scale in the primary.

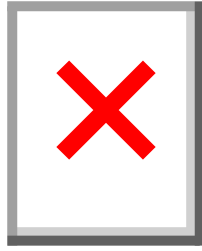
THE BILLIONAIRE ADMINISTRATION — Trump has offered deputy Defense secretary to private equity investor **STEPHEN FEINBERG**, [WaPo's John Hudson scooped](#), though it's not clear yet whether he's accepted. Feinberg would have to be confirmed by the Senate for the No. 2 Pentagon spot. He was head of the President's Intelligence Advisory Board in Trump's first administration and has long backed Trump, though his investments in hypersonic missile and other defense companies could raise conflict-of-interest questions.

Good Tuesday afternoon. Thanks for reading Playbook PM. Drop me a line at eokun@politico.com.

A message from Tobacco-Free Kids Action Fund:

E-cigarettes have gone from bad to worse. They are hooking kids with fun flavors, more nicotine than ever and even built-in video games. Some vapes have as much nicotine as 20 packs of cigarettes. Almost all are illegal. To protect kids, the FDA and other federal agencies must act now to remove illegal products from the market and stop them from being imported into the U.S. [Learn more.](#)

 **6 THINGS YOU NEED TO KNOW**



Senate Majority Leader-elect John Thune is making plans for two different reconciliation bills. | Francis Chung/POLITICO

1. GOP PLANNING: Senate Majority Leader-elect **JOHN THUNE** laid the groundwork for his chamber's ambitious policy plans in the new year today at a Senate GOP retreat, where Trump dialed in to give his legislative allies a pep talk, [per Axios' Stef Kight](#). Thune told his conference to gear up for a tougher schedule of long days and five-day workweeks in the first few months of the year to get key legislation passed and nominees confirmed, along with an end to lengthy floor votes, [per Semafor's Burgess Everett](#).

He also envisioned two different reconciliation bills: one focused on the border, energy and defense within a month of Trump taking office and a second for the big tax package, [per Punchbowl's Andrew Desiderio](#).

With so much on their plate, some Republicans don't want to add a government spending fight for the current fiscal year, which is the likely outcome if Congress punts with a continuing resolution this month. Senate GOP appropriators [tell NOTUS' Haley Byrd Wilt and Emily Kennard](#) that

negotiators should strike a deal now to pass funding for the whole year. But some senators say they'd prefer to wait and give Trump more sway.

2. DANCE OF THE SUPERPOWERS: China hit back hard today in an escalating set of trade/national security moves with the U.S., barring exports related to a set of critical minerals, [per Reuters' Amy Lv and Tony Munroe](#). Beijing's commerce ministry said "items related to the minerals gallium, germanium and antimony that have potential military applications" are immediately curbed for the U.S. Restrictions on these products, which are used for semiconductor chips and other technologies, both reflect recent U.S. export restrictions and come as Trump threatens to ramp up a trade war with China.

Related read: **JOHN LEUNG**, one of the prisoners freed by China last week and sent to the U.S., was a secret FBI informant, a role masked by his public presentation as a philanthropist flitting among high-powered Chinese circles in Houston, [NYT's Mara Hvistendahl, Joy Dong and Adam Goldman reveal](#).

[REGISTER NOW](#): *As the 118th Congress ends, major decisions loom, including healthcare appropriations. Key focus: site neutrality. Can aligning hospital and clinic costs cut federal spending, reflect physician costs, and lower patient expenses? [Join policymakers and providers to discuss](#).*

3. WHAT JULIE SU IS UP TO: ["Biden moves to end subminimum wages for people with disabilities,"](#) by WaPo's Jackie Alemany: "The Biden administration is moving to phase out a Depression-era program that allows some employers to pay disabled workers far less than minimum wage, fulfilling one of President Joe Biden's campaign promises and triggering what is likely to become a fierce legal and political battle. The decision is the culmination of the Department of Labor's year-long review of the program, which opponents have criticized as a form of discrimination and supporters have described as providing disabled people with hard-to-find opportunities for steady wages and meaningful work."

4. PAGING LEE ZELDIN: ["Formaldehyde Causes More Cancer Than Any Other Toxic Air Pollutant. Little Is Being Done to Curb](#)

[the Risk,](#)” by ProPublica’s Sharon Lerner and Al Shaw: “[Regulators’] attempts to limit the chemical have been repeatedly thwarted by the many companies that rely on it. ... The Environmental Protection Agency is expected to take a step later this month toward creating new rules that could restrict formaldehyde. But the agency responsible for protecting the public from the harms of chemicals has significantly underestimated the dangers posed by formaldehyde, a ProPublica investigation has found. ... [Even those efforts could] hit a dead end after Donald Trump is inaugurated.”

5. THE TRUMP EFFECT: Migrants waiting for asylum appointments are desperately hoping to get in before Trump takes office — or they may return to their home countries, [Reuters’ Lizbeth Diaz reports](#). The threat of cartel violence in their current positions throughout Mexico is just too great for many migrants. And if Trump slams the door shut for asylum pathways, some Venezuelans and others may opt to leave Mexico, though some say they’ll try to cross illegally instead.

6. TIME OUT: [“No more daylight saving time? Musk, Ramaswamy muse on ending clock changes,”](#) by WaPo’s Dan Diamond: “The ‘Department of Government Efficiency’ may target the century-old practice, the men suggested on social media. It was not immediately clear whether they were serious.”

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PLAYBOOKERS

Pete Hegseth is getting [selective coverage on Fox News](#).

Michael Bloomberg [urged the Senate](#) to reject **Robert F. Kennedy Jr.**

Mike Levin wants to get [on House Appropriations](#).

Janet Yellen’s home was near the site of [a Secret Service agent opening fire](#) over alleged attempted car break-ins.

OUT AND ABOUT — SPOTTED at the National Taxpayers Union's holiday festivities at Sazerac House last night: **Nick Wyatt, Jonny Slemrod, Chris Gray, Ken Clifford, Brandie Berish, KK Seago, Halie Craig, Joseph Ballard, Edgar Barrios, Micah Bock** and **Bill Bailey**.

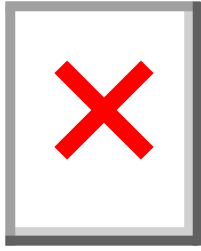
TRANSITIONS — Christian LoBue has been named president of the National Institute for Reproductive Health and its Action Fund. She most recently was EVP of campaign strategy at M+R Win, and is a NARAL and Planned alum. ... **Alex Garcia** is joining Continental Strategy as a partner. He previously was deputy political director for the Trump campaign. ... **Jake Olson** is joining RaceTrac as head of government affairs. He previously was chief of staff for Rep. Beth Van Duyne (R-Texas). **Ryan Dilworth** is moving up to be her chief, and **Brayden Woods** is moving up to legislative director. ...

... **Jason Johnson** is now a director of client and campaigns at Purple Strategies. He previously was comms director for Rep. Raúl Grijalva (D-Ariz.) and a comms adviser for the House Natural Resources Dems. ...

Taylor Holmes is joining Rich Feuer Anderson as an assistant VP. She previously was a senior associate on Wells Fargo's government relations and public policy team. ... **Amanda Fuchs Miller** has restarted her policy and advocacy consulting firm, Seventh Street Strategies. She most recently was deputy assistant secretary of Education for higher education programs, and is a Brian Schatz and Kirsten Gillibrand alum.

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*Send Playbookers tips to playbook@politico.com or text us at **202-556-3307**. Playbook couldn't happen without our editor **Mike DeBonis**, deputy editor **Zack Stanton** and Playbook Daily Briefing producer **Callan Tansill-Suddath**.*



Parents are pleading: FDA must protect kids. Over 1.6 million kids use e-cigarettes. Nearly 90% use flavored products. [Clear the market of illegal vapes now.](#)

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