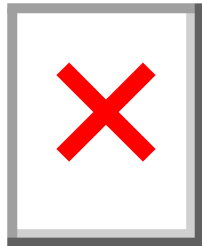


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May 06, 2025

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BY **JACK BLANCHARD**

Presented by The American Council of Life Insurers

With help from Eli Okun, Garrett Ross and Bethany Irvine



Listen to today's Daily Briefing

Good Tuesday morning. This is **Jack Blanchard**, still learning the hard way that when it rains in D.C., it *really rains*. Turns out the English weather wasn't so bad after all.

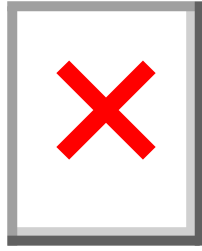
HURRICANE SEASON: The Washington Capitals face off in the second round of the NHL playoffs this evening for the first time since [the glory days of 2018](#). The Carolina Hurricanes are the Caps' opponents at Capital One Arena tonight for the first in a best-of-seven contest. There are still a [smattering of resale tickets](#) if you fancy watching **Ovi** and co. duke it out for a place in the conference finals. Or you can catch the game [live on ESPN](#) from **7 p.m.**

In today's Playbook:

- Canadian PM **Mark Carney** is in D.C. following his election win and faces off with President **Donald Trump** today.
- Republicans on the Hill are holding frenetic closed-doors meetings to try to get their budget bill over the line.
- *Another Abrego Garcia?* A Baltimore judge will today hold a hearing on the case of a *second* man she says was improperly deported to El Salvador.



DRIVING THE DAY



Canadian Prime Minister Mark Carney speaks at a press conference in Ottawa, Ontario, on May 2, 2025. | Patrick Doyle/AFP via Getty Images

CARN BEFORE THE STORM: Canadian Prime Minister **Mark Carney** is in Washington today for face-to-face talks with the man who — let’s face it — *signed and sealed* his election victory. Carney meets with President **Donald Trump** at lunchtime for an Oval Office tête-à-tête, eight days after his stunning win in Canada’s federal elections. Carney’s Liberal Party had been floundering more than 20 points behind the opposition conservatives at the turn of the year, before two crucial factors changed the dynamic. One was **Justin Trudeau**’s resignation as PM. The other, of course, was Trump.

In case you’ve lost track, Trump first started referring to Canada as the “51st state” last year, seemingly as a way of trolling “Governor” Trudeau. Then, at a press conference in January, Trump announced he was considering using “economic force” to acquire Canada outright. And then came the tariffs, which served only to rally millions of Canadians behind Carney, who called out the president while painting Canada’s Conservatives as too closely aligned with him — a political gambit that worked spectacularly. Carney has

essentially built an entire political career in a few short months based entirely on his opposition to Trump.

So the first question for today: *Will he say thank you?*

More seriously: How will the two men react when the press pool starts throwing some of Trump's past quotes at them as they sit side by side in the Oval Office? Carney has made clear he takes Trump's threats seriously — "President Trump is trying to break us so America can own us," he said last week — so can hardly try to laugh the whole thing off. Indeed, Carney previously vowed not to speak to Trump at all unless he's shown sufficient "respect." Which makes today's Oval Office event the most fraught with political danger since the visit of Ukrainian President **Volodymyr Zelenskyy** nine-and-a-half weeks ago.

A message from The American Council of Life Insurers:

Life insurers put life into America

People, businesses and communities across the country rely on life insurers for the \$8 trillion they invest in the U.S. economy, the policies they guarantee and the financial safety nets they create. [See how](#) life insurers help America grow and prosper.

First in Playbook — How the White House sees it: Meanwhile, aides to Trump suggest that the president will greet Carney with "little more than a metaphorical shrug," as POLITICO's Megan Messerly, Eli Stokols and Mike Blanchfield report. "Just another world leader coming to visit. One of many," as one White House official put it. "No bells and whistles for the new guy," said another. "It's really just to check a box," said a third. They're not exactly rolling out the red carpet. [Read the full story here](#)

This stuff matters: As the Zelenskyy bust-up showed, the made-for-camera diplomacy which Trump delights in can have serious consequences if it all goes wrong. *But it doesn't have to.* Consider the fate of British PM **Keir Starmer** — a buttoned-up, left-leaning human rights lawyer who clearly has little common ground with the U.S. president. But Starmer got the tone spot on in February, surprising (and flattering) Trump with a [handwritten letter](#) from **King Charles III**. The result was lavish praise... and only a baseline 10 percent tariff for U.K. goods.

Maybe it will all be fine? Trump has been on his best behavior since Carney's election, hailing the Canadian PM as a "very nice gentleman" and describing their first phone call in glowing terms. Trump charitably noted that *both* the main election candidates had "hated Trump," and even suggested Carney was the more agreeable of the two. For his part, Carney has vowed to keep it professional — and after many years working as a central banker in Canada and the U.K., has had plenty of practice at dealing diplomatically with politicians.

For Carney ... the big-ticket item on today's agenda is trade. Trump has already said Carney "wants to make a deal," which is hardly surprising given the Canadian economy is reeling from the shock of U.S. tariffs. Commerce Secretary **Howard Lutnick** was on Fox News last night and suggested the existing USMCA trade deal — the successor to NAFTA which Trump negotiated in his first term — is "OK for now," but that a substantial renegotiation is looming in 2026. So it's possible talks will focus on that.

Side note: Lutnick was one of *six* Cabinet members appearing live on Fox News last night between the hours of 4 p.m. and 10 p.m. — along with Attorney General **Pam Bondi**, HHS Secretary **Robert F. Kennedy Jr.**, Education Secretary **Linda McMahon**, Transportation Secretary **Sean Duffy** and Homeland Security Secretary **Kristi Noem**. *On top of that*, Fox News had interviews with two of the White House's most powerful aides — **Stephen Miller** and **Karoline Leavitt** — and part 2 of an interview with DOGE's **Elon Musk**. Seriously guys, *he's not watching the whole time*.

Back to Canada: For all Trump's fiery rhetoric, it's worth stressing — and once again, your author can't quite believe he's typing this — that the U.S. president [has stopped short of ruling out military force](#) to annex Canada, but said it was "highly unlikely." But that hasn't stopped Canadian novelist **Stephen Marche** writing a [grimly entertaining assessment](#) in the Atlantic of the real-world consequences were he to do so. "Canadians are imagining the unimaginable because they have to," Marche notes. As a window into the nation's current mindset, it's illuminating.

PERFECT TIMING: This is an unprecedented moment in Canadian politics that will shape Canada and its relationship with the U.S. for decades. POLITICO, as always, will be your guide to the key issues and the power players driving the agenda — and now we're launching a revamped version

of one of our signature newsletters: Canada Playbook. [Sign up here to get it straight in your inbox.](#)

Elsewhere on trade: Economic news is likely to dominate much of the day, with a series of high-profile moments through the morning and early afternoon. **At 8:30 a.m.**, the government releases U.S. trade stats for March ... At **10 a.m.**, Treasury Secretary **Scott Bessent** is before the House Appropriations Committee, and may get a question or two on trade ... Carney is due in the Oval Office at **11:45 a.m.** ... and U.S. Trade Representative **Jamieson Greer** is speaking at the Milken Institute conference in L.A. at **1 p.m.** (Eastern).

Not impressed: Trump's unexpected vow on Sunday evening to whack foreign film imports with punishing 100 percent tariffs — crafted with input from his Hollywood envoy **Jon Voight** — has left movie studios and labor unions bewildered, [POLITICO's Jeremy White and Melanie Mason report.](#) California's elected officials are now frantically trying to assess the likely impact on the state's faltering entertainment industry.

But but but: California Gov. **Gavin Newsom** is taking the opportunity to try and get the Trump administration to support a \$7.5 billion federal film tax credit to aid the entertainment industry, as [NYT's Shawn Hubler, Matt Stevens and Nicole Sperling report.](#) "Building on our successful state program, we're eager to partner with the Trump administration to further strengthen domestic production and Make America Film Again," Newsom said in a statement.

A message from The American Council of Life Insurers:

Life insurers are the single largest investor in U.S. corporate bonds.

When it comes to supporting America's economy, life insurers have a huge impact. Their investment in job-creating, innovation-driving and economy-building bonds builds brighter communities across the country. [See how](#) life insurers fuel economies.

MEANWHILE ON THE HILL

EARS TO THE DOOR: All the most important stuff in Congress today will be happening behind closed doors as House Republicans try to sort through the sticking points gumming up their spending megabill. Happily, details are sure to trickle out via the intrepid Hill press pack — so keep a close eye on the House Ways & Means Republicans (gathering at **10 a.m.**) and the House Energy & Commerce Committee Republicans (meeting from **10:15 a.m.** to noon.). [The full details from POLITICO's Benjamin Guggenheim and Meredith Lee Hill](#) ... [Follow along with Inside Congress Live](#)

For the record: Speaker **Mike Johnson** admitted yesterday that intra-party debates could cause his self-imposed Memorial Day deadline for the bill to slip, [per POLITICO's Meredith Lee Hill](#).

First in Playbook — What Dems are reading: There's plenty of anxiety in key battleground districts over potential cuts to Medicaid, according to new data from GOP polling firm Meeting Street Insights. **The topline:** 68 percent of voters said cutting Medicaid benefits to pay for tax cuts is a bad idea — including 44 percent of Republicans. And looking ahead to next year's midterms, 52 percent of voters said they'd be less likely to vote for a member of Congress who supports Medicaid cuts. The poll was conducted across 10 battleground districts in Arizona, Colorado, Iowa, Maine, Michigan, New York and Pennsylvania. [See the full memo](#)

Not behind closed doors: Democrats will get the chance to grill several Cabinet members this morning on Trump's latest cost-cutting plans. Bessent, Noem and Agriculture Secretary **Brooke Rollins** are all hitting the Hill today to testify on their portions of the president's FY 2026 budget request, [my Inside Congress colleagues report](#). They reckon Bessent will also get pressed on the so-called "X date" when the government finally runs out of money.

AOC OUT: Rep. **Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez** (D-N.Y.) has decided not to bid to become the lead Democrat on the House Oversight Committee, [POLITICO's Nick Wu writes](#). AOC's decision leaves a crowd of young Dem contenders who could still take a shot — including Reps. **Jasmine Crockett** (D-Texas), **Robert Garcia** (D-Calif.), **Ro Khanna** (D-Calif.) and **Maxwell Frost** (D-Fla.).

ANOTHER FACE IN THE CROWD: Rep. **Robin Kelly** is joining what looks set to be a crowded field of Democrats hoping to succeed retiring Sen.

Dick Durbin, [POLITICO's Shia Kapos reports this morning](#). Kelly joins Illinois Lt. Gov. **Juliana Stratton**, with Rep. **Raja Krishnamoorthi** also expected to announce a bid. Rep. **Lauren Underwood** is also thought to be eyeing the seat.

AND ICYMI: Brian Kemp continues the trend of governors passing on a chance to join Congress. The Georgia governor will *not* run for Senate next year, [POLITICO's Adam Wren, Andrew Howard and Jordain Carney scooped](#), despite being widely seen as the best-placed Republican to take on Democratic Sen. **Jon Ossoff**. “Without Kemp in the race, Republicans face an unpredictable primary that could include divisive candidates like Rep. **Marjorie Taylor Greene**.”

COURT IN THE ACT

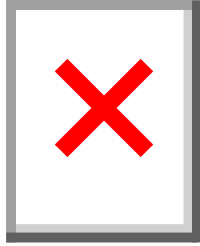
TODAY'S BIG COURT BATTLE: Trump's deportation of **Kilmar Abrego Garcia** to El Salvador has sparked a fierce courtroom battle — and a public firestorm. “But there is a second man who, according to a judge, was also improperly deported to El Salvador and must be returned,” [POLITICO's Josh Gerstein reports](#). “POLITICO has identified him as **Daniel Lozano-Camargo**, a 20-year-old citizen of Venezuela who was living in Houston and running a car detailing business until March 15, when the Trump administration declared him an ‘alien enemy’ and swiftly deported him to an El Salvador prison.”

The parallels with Abrego Garcia are fascinating: U.S. District Judge **Stephanie Gallagher** — *who was appointed by Trump* — ordered the administration to “facilitate” Lozano-Camargo's return. As with Abrego Garcia, the admin is resisting. “In a court filing released Monday, the Justice Department called Lozano-Camargo a member of ‘a violent terrorist gang’ and said that disqualifies him from asylum in the U.S. Gallagher is set to hold a hearing on the issue Tuesday in her Baltimore courtroom.” Watch this space.

REPORT CARD: A secret report from U.S. intelligence agencies made public yesterday severely undermines the administration's rationale for deploying the 1798 Alien Enemies Act to deport Venezuelan men to El Salvador. The memo “states that spy agencies do not believe that the administration of Venezuela's president, **Nicolás Maduro**, controls a

criminal gang, Tren de Aragua” — a direct contradiction of Trump’s argument for using the law, [NYT’s Charlie Savage and Julian Barnes report](#).

A message from The American Council of Life Insurers:



FIRST IN PLAYBOOK: POLITICO’s Ankush Khardori is up with a must-read Rule of Law column examining how the Justice Department is squandering its most potent asset: the credibility of its lawyers. “In federal courthouses across the country, the Justice Department benefits from a

general presumption of good faith when a DOJ lawyer walks into a courtroom, because people assume that they are both honest and well-intentioned,” Ankush writes. “That may be changing.” He notes Trump’s DOJ lawyers have “come under fire from judges across the country” who are delivering “unusually sharp” comments — “at times directly questioning the honesty of the government’s lawyers and the accuracy of their factual claims.” [Read the full story here](#)

BEST OF THE REST

DONALD VS. DEUTSCHLAND: Friedrich Merz’s bid to become Germany’s chancellor fell six votes short in parliament today — a humiliating result “for a politician who was already struggling to retain support two months after the country’s election, and amid brickbats” hurled by Trump, [POLITICO’s Nette Nöstlinger, James Angelos and Chris Lunday report](#). **What now?** A second vote is “expected to take place this week,” though timing is TBD.

FOR PETE’S SAKE: Signalgate just won’t quit. The latest revelation comes from [WSJ’s Alex Ward and Nancy Youssef](#), who report that Defense Secretary **Pete Hegseth** “used Signal more extensively for official Pentagon business than previously disclosed, engaging in at least a dozen separate chats.” They detail one case in which Hegseth “told aides on the encrypted app to inform foreign governments about an unfolding military operation,” and another in which he “used the nongovernmental message service to discuss media appearances, foreign travel, his schedule, and other unclassified but sensitive information.”

POSTCARD FROM ALCATRAZ: [POLITICO’s Will McCarthy spent the day out on Alcatraz Island](#) after Trump said he wants to reopen the legendary prison to “house America’s most ruthless and violent” offenders. “Trump’s declaration marked another pivot point in the strange and sordid history of Alcatraz,” Will writes.

TAKING THEM TO SCHOOL: Trump’s assault on academic institutions continues, with Harvard University marked as ineligible to receive new research grants from the federal government, [POLITICO’s Bianca Quilantan reports](#).

The next turn of the screw: Columbia University has received a proposal for a consent decree from the Trump administration, [WSJ's Liz Essley Whyte and Douglas Belkin report](#). "Columbia leaders are negotiating with the government and weighing what to do."

■ TALK OF THE TOWN

Kamala Harris reconnected with the Democratic base ... by, erm, [dazzling at the Met Gala](#).

Ezra Klein and **David Shor** are [set to talk with Senate Democrats](#) at their issues retreat at Mount Vernon.

Peter Doocy had another [unexpected encounter with a bird](#) outside the White House.

PLAYBOOK METRO SECTION — Speaker **Mike Johnson** told reporters yesterday that he still intends to hold a House vote to fix D.C.'s \$1 billion funding shortfall, [POLITICO's Hailey Fuchs and Meredith Lee Hill write](#). "I talked to the mayor and told her that we would do it as quickly as possible," Johnson said. "Reconciliation has taken all of our energy right now, but we're not delaying this for some political purpose or any intentionality. It's just a matter of schedule, even at this point."

— ["A landlord builds. A restaurant closes. And D.C.'s tiny Chinatown gets smaller,"](#) by WaPo's Meagan Flynn and Michael Laris

PULITZERS RECAP — "The New York Times won four Pulitzer Prizes and the New Yorker three on Monday for journalism in 2024 that touched on topics like the fentanyl crisis, the U.S. military and last summer's assassination attempt on President Donald Trump," [AP's David Bauder writes](#). "The Pulitzers' prestigious public service medal went to ProPublica for the second straight year. **Kavitha Surana, Lizzie Presser, Cassandra Jaramillo** and **Stacy Kranitz** were honored for reporting on pregnant women who died after doctors delayed urgent care in states with strict abortion laws."

"The Washington Post won for 'urgent and illuminating' breaking news coverage of the Trump assassination attempt. The Pulitzers honored **Ann Telnaes**, who quit the Post in January after the news outlet refused to run her

editorial cartoon lampooning tech chiefs — including Post owner **Jeff Bezos** — cozying up to Trump. The Pulitzers praised her ‘fearlessness.’”

[See the full list of winners and finalists](#)

OUT AND ABOUT — SPOTTED at a screening for “OCTOBER 8,” a new documentary tracking the spike of anti-Semitism in America, in the Capitol Visitors Center yesterday evening: Sen. **Kirsten Gillibrand** (D-N.Y.), Reps. **Laura Gillen** (D-N.Y.), **Virginia Foxx** (R-N.C.) and **Dan Goldman** (D-N.Y.) and filmmaker/director **Wendy Sachs**.

MEDIA MOVES — Jake Lahut is joining Wired as a senior writer on the politics desk covering the White House and taking over the Politics Lab newsletter. He previously was a freelance contributor. ... **Tara Ayres** is now a booking producer at Bloomberg. She previously was a booking producer at Yahoo Finance, Scripps News, MSNBC and Fox Business.

FIRST IN PLAYBOOK — Zac Petkanas is launching Defend America Action, where he will serve as founder and senior strategist. Also joining the leadership team are **Jess McIntosh** as senior adviser, **Rodericka Applewhite** as senior spokesperson and **Joe Vogel** as director of outreach.

TRANSITIONS — Michele Jawando has been announced as the next president of Omidyar Network. She previously has been SVP. ... The House Energy and Commerce GOP has added **Byron Brown** as chief counsel for the Environment, Manufacturing and Critical Minerals Subcommittee and **Katie West** as press secretary covering health care. Brown previously was assistant general counsel for the American Chemistry Council. West previously was comms director for Rep. David Schweikert (R-Ariz.). ...

... Forterra has added **Stephen Rubright** as head of government affairs and **John Mark Wilson** as defense growth lead. Rubright previously headed government affairs and policy at Astellas. Wilson previously was at Applied Intuition and is an NSC alum. ... **Max Bouchet** is joining Meridian International Center as director of subnational diplomacy. He previously was director for city and state diplomacy at the Truman Center for National Policy.

WELCOME TO THE WORLD — Raj Shah, chief comms officer for battery manufacturer AESC and a Mike Johnson and Trump White House

alum, and **Shivali Shah**, business development manager at AARP, on April 27 welcomed Dillon Jaimin Shah. [Pic](#)

— **Rodell Mollineau**, co-founder and partner at ROKK Solutions, and **Sheena Mollineau**, director at PWC, on April 17 welcomed Xander Illian Mollineau, who joins big brother Brody. [Pic](#) ... [Another pic](#)

HAPPY BIRTHDAY: Rep. **Anna Paulina Luna** (R-Fla.) ... **Spencer Pederson** ... **McKinley Lewis** of the Senate Aging Committee ... **Tucker Eskew** of Vianovo ... **Wendy Helgemo** ... **Kate Jaffee** of the Aspen Institute ... **Meghan Conklin** ... MSNBC's **Lisa Ferri** ... **Bill Dolbow** ... **Claire Mullican** ... **Pat Cipollone** ... **Jamie Gorelick** ... former Sen. **Richard Shelby** (R-Ala.) (91) ... **David Rogers** ... former Rep. **Eric Fingerhut** (D-Ohio) ... Granicus' **Trevor Corning** ... **Sheena Mollineau** ... **Andy Oros** ... NBCUniversal's **Tejasi Thatte** ... **Joe Nocera** ... **Tony Blair**

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Playbook couldn't happen without our editor **Zack Stanton** and Playbook
Daily Briefing producer **Callan Tansill-Suddath**.*

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