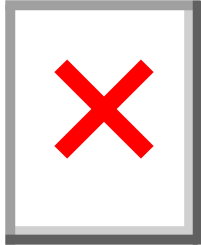


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Sent: May 01, 2025 09:58:58.000000000 UTC
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To: jperperian@cityofmelrose.org <jperperian@cityofmelrose.org>

May 01, 2025

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BY JACK BLANCHARD



Presented by

With help from Eli Okun, Garrett Ross and Bethany Irvine



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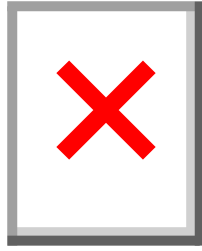
Good Thursday morning, and welcome to May. This is **Jack Blanchard**, shocked to discover that one-third of 2025 has already passed. In the words of the great Chicagoan philosopher **Ferris Bueller**, *life moves pretty fast*. I, for one, shall be stopping to [smell the roses](#) in Dumbarton Oaks this weekend.

FIGHT! FIGHT! FIGHT! *Elon vs. the WSJ*: Tesla and **Elon Musk** are pushing back hard against a [sensational WSJ report](#) which said the auto company began searching for a new CEO after a miserable start to 2025. In a [statement published on X](#) at 1:23 a.m., Tesla insisted it is “highly confident” in Musk’s abilities, and said it was “absolutely false” to say its board had contacted recruitment firms to initiate a CEO search. Musk then started posting [lots of angry stuff](#) on X.

Speaking of Musk: POLITICO’s Chase DiFelicianantonio [has the deets](#) on another brewing row between Musk and his AI nemesis **Sam Altman**, which is always fun.

In today’s Playbook ...

- **Donald Trump** and **JD Vance** test, erm, *different* messages on tariffs.
- GOP Medicaid cuts face a Trump-shaped roadblock
- **Stephen Miller** joins **Karoline Leavitt** for today’s “Fox & Friends” friendly White House briefing.



Vice President JD Vance and Attorney General Pam Bondi listen during a cabinet meeting at the White House on April 30, 2025, in Washington. | Evan Vucci/AP

THE MAGA ECONOMY: The White House will try to get back on the economic front foot this morning after being derailed by yesterday's grim GDP figures. Vice President **JD Vance** has been dispatched to South Carolina for a speech at a steel plant, where he'll speak about what he'll call "America's manufacturing renaissance." Vance will also be sitting down at the factory with Fox News' **Bret Baier** for an in-depth interview going out on his show "Special Report" tonight at **6 p.m.** Who knows, he may even take the attention away from **Donald Trump** for a while.

Yeah, right: Only kidding. Every day is Trump Day in these parts, and the president's throwaway comments on tariffs during yesterday's Cabinet meeting were really quite a moment. [This was](#), I believe, the first time Trump has acknowledged what mainstream economists and retailers have been warning for weeks: that his tariffs on China could significantly raise prices and limit the availability of goods for ordinary Americans.

A quote for the ages: “Well, maybe the children will have two dolls instead of 30 dolls, you know?” Trump shrugged. “And maybe the two dolls will cost a couple of bucks more.”

Needless to say ... This is *exactly the opposite* of a winning message. Focus groups are packed with swing voters complaining they backed Trump specifically to bring prices down, and are now deeply concerned about the direction the economy is headed. Trump, of course, has no more elections to win — but GOP types with an eye on 2026 or 2028 must be wincing.

2028, you say? Enter Vance, who hopes he most certainly *does* have more elections to win. As he knows well, the message on tariffs that connects most effectively with voters is the idea they will bring back skilled manufacturing jobs to America and restore the nation’s pride as a place that makes things once again. Expect to hear plenty more such talk from Vance today.

Steel yourselves: An American steel plant is a great place for this kind of speech, given the 25 percent tariff Trump slapped on metal imports shortly after his return to the White House. The Nucor Steel plant where Vance is speaking employs 1,000 workers, and its CEO **Leon Topalian** is a big fan of Trump’s approach. “It’s fair trade and creating a level playing field,” he [told CNBC in February](#). “I believe these tariffs are going to do that.”

Not convinced: Kamala Harris. Vance’s predecessor as VP made something of a comeback speech in San Francisco last night, attacking Trump’s 100-day record and [describing his tariff policy](#) as “the greatest man-made economic crisis in modern presidential history.” She also gave shoutouts to the handful of Dems who’ve made waves with their vocal resistance — including Rep. **Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez** (D-N.Y.) and Sens. **Cory Booker** (D-N.J.) and **Chris Van Hollen** (D-Md.). [POLITICO’s Dustin Gardiner and Melanie Mason have the story](#).

Not getting a shoutout from Harris: Sen. **Sheldon Whitehouse** (D-R.I.), who skipped a (largely symbolic) Senate vote on Trump’s tariffs last night in order to attend a conference in South Korea. The vote to repeal Trump’s tariffs was tied 49-49, meaning Whitehouse could have tipped the balance had he been present. He’s been getting plenty of grief on social media, though [Punchbowl’s Andrew Desiderio reports that](#) Hill Dems are actually cross at their Senate leadership for agreeing to schedule the vote while he was away.

One to watch: Potentially more meaningful opposition to Trump's tariffs is currently making its way through the courts, with several groups arguing the president has exceeded his powers. But as [POLITICO's Ankush Khadori writes](#) this morning, if the Supreme Court strikes down nationwide judicial injunctions — a recent Trump bugbear — in the litigation over his birthright citizenship executive order, those same lawsuits which claim his tariffs are illegal could also be weakened. “The future of the American economy — and Trump's presidency — could depend on how it all shakes out,” Ankush writes.

Speaking of Trump: There will be plenty of opportunity for the president to weigh in further on the economy today, with a National Day of Prayer event in the White House Rose Garden at **11 a.m.** and a commencement speech at the University of Alabama this evening. This follows an interview by phone for a surreal NewsNation town hall event last night hosted by **Chris Cuomo** and also featuring ESPN star **Stephen A. Smith**, MAGA guru **Steve Bannon** and HHS Secretary **Robert F. Kennedy Jr.** What a world.

The top line? Trump said Smith should *totally* run for president in 2028. “I’ve been pretty good at picking people and picking candidates,” Trump said, “and I will tell you — I’d love to see him run.” Stranger things have happened. [The New York Post wrote it up.](#)

A message from Planned Parenthood Federation of America:

1 in 4 people have visited a Planned Parenthood health center for expert, affordable care, including birth control, wellness visits, cancer screenings and more.

But lawmakers who oppose reproductive health are targeting Planned Parenthood. They want to take away the health care millions of patients rely on — especially those with low incomes.

Planned Parenthood won't stop fighting for the care people need and deserve.

We need you in this fight. Visit <http://ImForPP.org> to learn more.

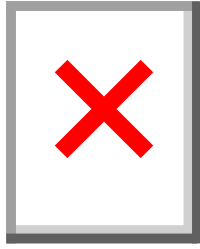
UKRAINE ON THE BRAIN

THE ART OF THE DEAL: All eyes are on Russian President **Vladimir Putin** today after the U.S. and Ukraine finally signed their long-awaited minerals deal, [POLITICO's Eli Stokols and Felicia Schwartz report](#). Ukrainian President **Volodymyr Zelenskyy** hopes signing the deal will show Trump that Ukraine is ready to play ball. Whether Russia is ready to follow suit and agree to a ceasefire is another matter.

The details: Washington and Kyiv will work together on an investment fund for reconstruction, with the U.S. contributing directly or with new military aid. The U.S. will be able to develop Ukrainian critical minerals and other resources, taking profits that Trump has framed as paying Americans back for all their assistance in recent years. Ukraine will still control its natural resources.

The big question: Now that Trump has what he wanted from Ukraine, is he finally ready to turn the screws on Putin? “Today’s agreement signals clearly to Russian leadership that the Trump administration is committed to a peace process centered on a free, sovereign and prosperous Ukraine over the long term,” Treasury Secretary **Scott Bessent** [said in a relatively punchy announcement](#) last night. But inside the White House, officials still genuinely don’t know whether Trump will ever really stick it to Putin with sanctions or other punishments, [The Atlantic's Jonathan Lemire reports](#).

One option for squeezing Moscow: Sen. **Lindsey Graham's** (R-S.C.) bill to crack down on Russia with new sanctions — and tariffs on countries that purchase Russian energy — has now amassed a filibuster-proof level of support, [Graham told WSJ's Lindsay Wise and Michael Gordon](#). It has 60 co-sponsors, and Graham thinks it will hit a veto-proof 67 this week. Graham wants it as a backup option if Putin continues to stall. Majority Leader **John Thune** supports the bill, though hasn’t yet committed to putting it on the floor. And the bill’s outlook in the House — and crucially, with Trump — is unclear.



MEANWHILE ON THE HILL

SHADOW OF TRUMP: As congressional Republicans continue to argue about how much money to slash from Medicaid, a problem looms on the horizon — in the form of Trump himself. The president fears cutting Medicaid will cause him serious political damage and is reluctant to sign off such a plan, [POLITICO's Rachael Bade, Adam Cancryn, Myah Ward and Meredith Lee Hill scooped](#) last night. Trump will soon be shown a menu of Medicaid possibilities by top House Republicans ([Axios' Victoria Knight](#) got

the latest circulating list), including per capita caps on funding to states that have expanded Medicaid. [More in Inside Congress](#)

Slow progress: House Energy and Commerce Chair **Brett Guthrie** (R-Ky.) met yesterday with moderates opposed to Medicaid cuts — *and* with the Freedom Caucus members demanding them. Unsurprisingly, significant obstacles remain, [per POLITICO's Ben Leonard and Meredith Lee Hill](#). Discussions about the state and local tax deduction (SALT) will continue today after pro-SALT Republicans and House leaders failed to reach agreement, [Bloomberg's Erik Wasson and Billy House report](#).

Best of the rest from the House's actions on the big, beautiful bill:

- **Taxing the wealthy:** Tax-writers are weighing ideas to restrict deductions for corporations tied to their compensation for top executives, raising taxes on companies and, indirectly, rich people, [WSJ's Richard Rubin and Olivia Beavers report](#).
- **Pensions:** Despite a no vote from Rep. **Mike Turner** (R-Ohio), Oversight Republicans narrowly advanced their portion of the bill, including cuts to federal workers' pensions and job protections, [per Roll Call's Jim Saksa](#).
- **Consumer protections:** Financial Services approved its part of the bill, including a huge 60 percent funding cut for the CFPB, [per POLITICO's Jasper Goodman](#).
- **Car fees:** Transportation Republicans backed away from a controversial \$20 vehicle registration fee and lowered funding for air traffic control modernization as a result, [per Roll Call's Valerie Yurk](#).
- **Antitrust:** Judiciary pulled a provision that would have consolidated control over antitrust in the Justice Department instead of the FTC, [POLITICO's Anthony Adragna and Hailey Fuchs report](#).
- **Immigration:** An effort to enshrine Trump's "gold card" visa idea for rich foreigners also went down, [per NBC](#).

Happening today: House Republicans will vote to try to bar California from banning gas cars, having already voted yesterday to block other Golden State climate and pollution policies, [per NYT's Lisa Friedman](#).

POLITICO IS BACK AT THE 2025 MILKEN GLOBAL CONFERENCE:

From May 4–7, California Playbook will deliver exclusive, on-the-ground coverage from the 28th Annual Milken Institute Global Conference. Get behind-the-scenes buzz, standout moments, and insights from leaders in AI, finance, health, philanthropy, geopolitics, and more. [Subscribe now](#) for your front-row seat to the conversations shaping our world.

BEST OF THE REST

MILLER TIME: There's another early start for the nation's intrepid White House reporters this morning as deputy chief of staff **Stephen Miller** joins press secretary **Karoline Leavitt** at **8:30 a.m.** to brief the media on "restoring common sense." There are various culture war topics this could be referring to, so we'll just have to wait and see — but let's hope they're serving up decent coffee.

The audience of one: [CBS News' Scott MacFarlane reports](#) these early starts are designed to catch Trump when he's watching "Fox & Friends."

IMMIGRATION FILES: Federal judge **Paula Xinis** set a new May 9 deadline for her inquiry into the case of **Kilmar Abrego Garcia**, rejecting the DOJ's request for more time. That will force depositions of U.S. officials who haven't yet facilitated his return, [per WaPo](#). Her order came [after the NYT reported](#) the Trump administration actually sent a note to Salvadoran President **Nayib Bukele's** government asking about Abrego Garcia's return — though it's not clear how genuine that effort was. Secretary of State **Marco Rubio** has also talked directly with Bukele about the case, [CNN reports](#).

And ICYMI: The NYT [published a big investigation](#) into the Abrego Garcia case yesterday that is well worth your time.

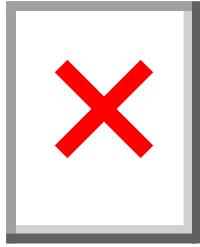
Coming attractions: Rubio said the administration is still trying to find more third-party nations to take in allegedly criminal deportees who can't be returned to their home countries, [per POLITICO's Gregory Svirnovskiy](#). The U.S. has already talked with Libya and Rwanda about the prospect, [CNN's Priscilla Alvarez and Kylie Atwood report](#).

COME RETRIBUTION: Chris Krebs' Global Entry program membership from Customs and Border Protection has been revoked, which he sees as political retaliation, [CNN's Jake Tapper reports](#). (His sin: not lying about the 2020 election.)

IN THE DOGE HOUSE: In a 9-6 vote, an appeals court rejected the Trump administration's bid to allow the Department of Government Efficiency to gain access to Social Security data, [Reuters' Nate Raymond reports](#). This one could hit the Supreme Court next.

The cuts start to bite: The Education Department is axing \$1 billion in grants for schools to hire mental health workers, [AP's Collin Binkley reports](#) ... AmeriCorps cuts have started to hit red states hard, [POLITICO's Sophia Cai and Ben Johansen reveal](#) ... And the World Trade Center Health Program for 9/11 survivors has been upended by mass layoffs, [ABC's Liz Neporent reports](#).

A message from Planned Parenthood Federation of America:



FIRST IN PLAYBOOK: Sabato's Crystal Ball at the University of Virginia Center for Politics is out with [its first gubernatorial race ratings for 2026](#). Arizona and Michigan are the only toss-ups ... Wisconsin leans Democratic, [as do this year's contests](#) in New Jersey and Virginia ... Georgia, Kansas and Nevada lean Republican.

ADAM BOEHLER GETS RESULTS: Kuwait released 10 more Americans detained in the country — another victory for the Trump administration's prisoner release efforts, [AP's Eric Tucker reports](#). Belarus also released a

jailed American after the U.S. said he was wrongfully detained, [per AP's Yuras Karmanau](#).

CAPITULATION CORNER: Paramount and Trump started mediation yesterday in the president's lawsuit over a "60 Minutes" interview — but remain far apart, [WSJ's Jessica Toonkel, Josh Dawsey and Annie Linskey scooped](#). Paramount has talked about offering \$15 million to \$20 million to settle, but Trump's team wants way more — plus an apology.

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■ TALK OF THE TOWN

Elissa Slotkin [played "Call of Duty: Black Ops 6"](#) with some young constituents. Top quote? "Die! Die! Die! ... Oh, a lady zombie just killed me. In pigtails."

David Hogg won [James Carville's support](#) after a fiery back and forth between the two. "David Hogg fights," Carville said. "The DNC needs him."

PLAYBOOK METRO SECTION — ["House Republicans Say They're Too Busy to Fix Their Accidental D.C. Budget Cuts,"](#) by NOTUS' Emily Kennard: "As the city drafts plans for furloughs, building closures and cuts to public safety services ... House Republicans have more or less forgotten about the issue."

BOOK CLUB — White House press secretary **Karoline Leavitt** sat down with Fox News' **Dana Perino** last night for a candid 90-minute conversation at the Studio Theatre, discussing Perino's new book, ["I Wish Someone Had Told Me"](#) and the unique challenges of their high-profile careers in Washington.

Leavitt — at 27, the youngest White House press secretary in history — said a strong family life at home has been key. "It can help bolster your career,

push you in your career, to have that support system at home,” she said. And she said motherhood helps her maintain perspective amid the pressures of political life. “No matter how hard or long or challenging the days are, to go home to ... a beautiful family really grounds you,” she said. Her young son, she added, “doesn’t give a crap that his mama is the White House press secretary. He just wants love.”

OUT AND ABOUT — SPOTTED at American Policy Ventures’ welcome party for **Erica Suarez** on Monday night at Junction Bistro on Capitol Hill: **Sharon Soderstrom, Reema Dodin, J.T. Jezerski, Marianne LeVine, Ed Corrigan, Ramesh Ponnuru, Liz Johnson, Jackie Barbour, Mary Kate Johnson, Larry Burton, Paolo Mastrangelo, Stefanie Parks, Kumar Garg, Liam deClive-Lowe, Brendan Dunn, Dan Todd, Neil Chatterjee, Laura Dove, Parth Ahya, Dianna Dunne, Molly Carpenter, Bill McBride, Katherine Sleichter, Connor Murphy, Kaily Grabemann, Katie Brown, Darin Miller, Soren Dayton, Laura Lee Burkett, Micah Chambers, Natalie Burkhalter, Robert Duncan, Steph Carlton and Dan Kunsman.**

— Climate Power en Acción, GreenLatinos and the Congressional Hispanic Caucus celebrated the legacy of the late Rep. Raúl Grijalva, including his leadership on environmental justice, on Tuesday night. **SPOTTED:** Reps. **Rob Menendez** (D-N.J.), **Adriano Espaillat** (D-N.Y.) and **Luz Rivas** (D-Calif.), **Antonieta Cádiz** and **Mark Magaña.**

FIRST IN PLAYBOOK — NewDEAL, which focuses on building the Democratic bench across the country, has announced its spring 2025 class of 19 up-and-coming center-left leaders at the state and local levels. The latest group includes Tempe, Arizona, Mayor **Corey Woods**, Hawaii state Sen. **Troy Hashimoto**, Iowa state Sen. **Sarah Trone Garriott**, Kentucky state Sen. **Katurah Herron**, Michigan state Sen. **Sarah Anthony**, Durham, North Carolina, Mayor **Leonardo Williams**, New York state Sen. **Jamaal Bailey** and Tulsa, Oklahoma, Mayor **Monroe Nichols**. [The full list](#)

MEDIA MOVES — Ron Brownstein is now a politics and policy columnist at Bloomberg Opinion. He is a CNN senior political analyst and previously was a senior editor at The Atlantic. ... **Emily Horne** has launched [Spin Class](#), a new Substack focused on “politics, policy, and culture through a comms lens.” She is founder and CEO of Allegro Public Affairs and a Biden NSC alum.

TRANSITIONS — Stacy Thompson is now director of outreach and partnerships at the National Security Action. She was previously deputy secretary of State for House affairs, and is a Jeanne Shaheen and Chrissy Houlahan alum. ... **Kate Kelly** is joining the Trust for Public Land as VP of government relations and policy, [POLITICO's E&E News' Jennifer Yachnin reports](#). She previously was deputy chief of staff for policy in the Biden Interior Department. ... **Jeff Ifrah, Jim Trusty** and **Ross Branson** have launched NexusOne Consulting, a government relations consulting firm focused on cryptocurrency and AI, [Fox News' Andrew Mark Miller reports](#). Ifrah is at Ifrah Law, and Trusty and Branson are Trump administration alums. ...

... **Alexandra de Hoop Scheffer** has been named the new president of the German Marshall Fund of the United States. She most recently was SVP for geostrategy and acting president. ... The Center for a New American Security is adding **Liza Tobin** and **Shana Mansbach** as adjunct senior fellows. Tobin is managing director at Garnaut Global and an NSC alum. Mansbach is a special government employee for the National Security Commission on Emerging Biotechnology and a Biden State Department and Nancy Pelosi alum. ... **Jaden Pena** is joining the WNBA's PR team. He previously was special assistant to the comms director on the Harris campaign.

HAPPY BIRTHDAY: American Bridge 21st Century's **Pat Dennis** and **Matilda Bress** ... **Ninio Fetalvo** ... **POLITICO's Ben Jacobs** and **Stephanie Zimmerman** ... **David Winston** ... **Anthony Cimino** of Carta ... **John Bridgeland** of Civic ... **Josh Tonsager** ... **Shaina Goodman** ... **Molly Levinson** of the Levinson Group ... Newsmax's **Rob Finnerty** ... **Rachael Dean Wilson** of Anduril Industries ... **Ankit Desai** ... **Megan Lowry** of the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine ... **Alex Cisneros** ... **Jon Gerberg** ... **Andrew Tyrrell** ... ProPublica's **Caroline Chen** ... **Elizabeth Stanley** ... **Emily Lamont** ... **Abby Huntsman** ... **Abe Foxman** ... **Matt Meyer** of Rep. Jason Smith's (R-Mo.) office ... **Will Heidlage** ... former Reps. **Ed Perlmutter** (D-Colo.) and **Matt Cartwright** (D-Pa.) ... Vogel Group's **Ali Khimji** ... **Kathryn Reed** ... **Stacey Dec** ... **Shivam Mallick Shah** ... **Leonard Downie Jr.** ... **Gevin Reynolds** ... **Menachem Rosensaft** of the World Jewish Congress ... Clinton Foundation's **Brian Cookstra** ... **Stacie Paxton Cobos** ... **Donna Walton Pagel**

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

Clarification: The White House disputed NewsNation's characterization of a comment that President Donald Trump made about Rep. John James (R-Mich.), as was included in yesterday's Playbook. "The President was asking John James — who was in the crowd — about Democrat Congressman Shri Thanedar," an official said.

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