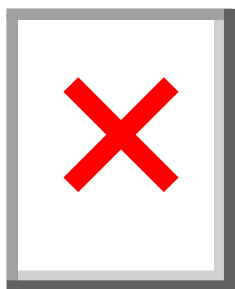


From: The Hill's Morning Report <thehill@email.thehill.com>
Sent: Dec 04, 2024 11:36:37.000000000 UTC
Subject: Hegseth, Gabbard face uphill climb with Senate GOP
To: kpbrodeur@cityofmelrose.org <kpbrodeur@cityofmelrose.org>





MORNING REPORT

Wednesday, December 4 | By Alexis Simendinger & Kristina Karisch



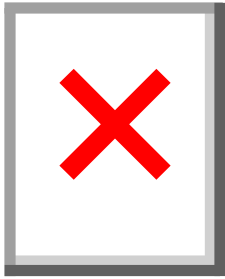
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In today's issue:

- President-elect weighs DeSantis, Ernst for DoD
- Trump's agenda finds Senate GOP budget friction
- Did a police officer tip off Proud Boys?
- South Korean president reverses martial law rule



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Hegseth, Gabbard face uphill climb with Senate GOP

Key nominees to **President-elect Trump's** Cabinet are on shaky ground, as senators appear increasingly skeptical of their backgrounds — and aptitude to lead federal agencies.

Defense secretary nominee **Pete Hegseth**, a former Army National Guard member and Fox News host, is in hot water as Senate Republicans grow concerned over a new set of revelations involving allegations of alcohol abuse and sexual misconduct in his past.

As many as six Senate Republicans, perhaps more, are currently not comfortable supporting Hegseth's bid to lead the Pentagon as new revelations about his past continue to be made public, [NBC News reports](#). With the GOP's slim incoming Senate majority, Hegseth can afford to lose only three Republican votes, assuming all Democrats vote against him.

*"I think some of these articles are very disturbing," Sen. **Lindsey Graham** (R-S.C.) [told CBS News](#). "He obviously has a chance to defend himself here, but some of this stuff is going to be difficult."*

As senators express their hesitation, leading Trump advisers have begun discussing who may be a viable replacement for Hegseth, [ABC News reports](#). Among the possible candidates: Sen. **Joni Ernst** (Iowa), Florida Gov. **Ron DeSantis**, Sen. **Bill Hagerty** (Tenn.) and Rep. **Mike Waltz** (Fla.), whom Trump has already selected to be national security adviser.

Picking DeSantis, a 2024 GOP primary rival for the presidency, would be a sharp turn for Trump, [The Wall Street Journal reports](#), but the governor is a well-known conservative with a service record who shares Trump's view on what they perceive as "woke" policies in the military.

The accusations against Hegseth mounted over the weekend. Hegseth's mother, **Penelope Hegseth**, had accused him of abusing women in an email in 2018, [The New York Times reported](#) Friday. The allegations came as he was going through a divorce with his second wife **Samantha Deering**, a co-worker at Vets For Freedom, after fathering a child out of wedlock with his current wife, **Jennifer Cunningham Raucher**. [The New Yorker reported](#) on Sunday that Hegseth was forced to step down by two nonprofit advocacy groups he ran due to mismanagement of funds, sexual impropriety and excessive drinking. Hegseth's drinking also worried colleagues at Fox News, [NBC News reported](#) on Tuesday, where he was a weekend host until earlier this month.

Sen. **Susan Collins** (R-Maine), who is [among at least a half-dozen senators](#) seen as on the fence, remained noncommittal on Hegseth. Collins told CNN the Senate needed *"an FBI background check to evaluate the allegations, we need to have the normal committee process of questionnaires about his background and we also need to have a public hearing."*

Trump's transition [had resisted signing an agreement](#) with the Department of Justice paving the way for the team to seek FBI background checks on the president-elect's appointees. On Tuesday, the transition team announced it signed the memorandum.

Typically, presidential transition teams sign the document well ahead of the election. Trump's team stalled for weeks, preventing the FBI from conducting background checks on any of his Cabinet nominees or processing security clearances for transition officials.

Some experts suggested that conducting those checks earlier could have helped avert scandals that have engulfed nominees such as Hegseth —

and forced his first pick for attorney general, former Rep. **Matt Gaetz**, (R-Fla.), to withdraw.

Also facing a tough lift? Some senators are skeptical about former Hawaii Rep. **Tulsi Gabbard**, Trump's choice to be director of national intelligence, based on her foreign policy positions and [past interactions with enemies of the U.S.](#), [The Hill's Al Weaver reports](#). Gabbard, a former House Democrat who endorsed Trump this year, has been a controversial Cabinet selection for weeks, but much of that time was clouded by Gaetz's ethics challenges.

After the Florida firebrand's resignation from the House and withdrawal from Cabinet consideration, nearly a half-dozen Senate Republicans and aides predicted Gabbard's confirmation would be uphill. And that was before Senate unease about Hegseth's alleged past behavior erupted in the news media over the weekend and surfaced Tuesday on Capitol Hill.

"Behind closed doors, people think she might be compromised. Like it's not hyperbole," a Republican aide told The Hill. "There are members of our conference who think she's a [Russian] asset."

Smart Take
with **Bob Cusack**

Don't forget about Sen. **Mitch McConnell** (R-Ky.).

McConnell [will be a free agent next year](#) as Sen. **John Thune** (S.D.) will replace him as GOP leader. McConnell and Trump have long had a rocky relationship, but the Kentucky lawmaker still holds a lot of sway with his Republican colleagues.

Most of Trump's appointees will be confirmed by the Senate, although there are a few who might not get to the finish line. For any controversial nomination, Senate Republicans must minimize defections. If Democrats unite, the GOP can only afford three "no" votes.

Moderates such as Sen. **Lisa Murkowski** (R-Alaska) and Collins aren't shy in taking on Trump, and they have good working relationships with McConnell. When the three of them are on the same page, Trump officials should pay attention.

McConnell feels strongly about defense spending and keeping Russia in check. Could he back Hegseth to lead the Pentagon?

Perhaps, though it's hard to see him approving Gabbard to be director of national intelligence.

When Rep. **Nancy Pelosi** (Calif.) stepped down as House Democratic leader, it was assumed she would quietly fade away as a rank-and-file member. That assumption was way off.

McConnell famously keeps his cards close to his vest, leaving rivals baffled on his next play. It's safe to say McConnell will be making some moves on Trump nominees and policymaking over the next two years. He shouldn't be underestimated.

Pentagon No. 2: Trump recently offered billionaire investor **Stephen Feinberg** the job of deputy Defense secretary, [The Washington Post reported](#). Feinberg, co-CEO of Cerberus Capital Management, is a longtime political supporter who has investments in defense companies that maintain lucrative government contracts. A spokesperson for Feinberg declined to say if he has accepted the potential nomination.

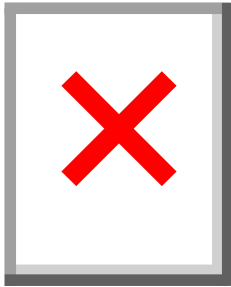
Drug Enforcement: Florida Hillsborough County Sheriff **Chad Chronister**, Trump's choice to lead the Drug Enforcement Administration, announced on Tuesday [he is withdrawing from consideration](#) just three days after Trump made his nomination known.

Chronister, who as sheriff [had virtually no experience](#) with the complex international investigations the agency handles, said in a Tuesday evening post on the social platform X that he would instead tend to his current duties overseeing an area of the Sunshine State that includes Tampa Bay.

3 Things to Know Today

1. [Medicare open enrollment](#) this year will end Saturday. Here are some last-minute tips that can help beneficiaries.
2. PG-rated animated films accounted for [one-third of U.S. ticket sales this year](#). Universal and Disney are behind four of the 10 highest-grossing domestic films in 2024. Ticket prices are high, true, but parents view movie-going as cheaper for families than weekend getaways.
3. Rural students and those of color are seen by education experts as disadvantaged by “[college deserts](#),” defined as community college options that are located more than 30 miles from high schools.

LEADING THE DAY



GOP senators are at odds over how to fund Trump's overall agenda:

An ambitious Senate budget plan to fulfill parts of Trump's agenda faces internal divisions over size, strategy, designations of mandatory and discretionary spending, investments in defense and hand-wringing about the size of the federal deficit, [The Hill's Alexander Bolton reports](#) in detail. *"There are a million ways this could play out,"* one Republican senator said after a half-day retreat Tuesday among the GOP conference.

Wrestling to lead in the minority: Judiciary Committee Democrats **Jerrold Nadler** (N.Y.), 77, and **Jamie Raskin** (Md.), 61, are vying to steer the panel's minority resistance next year. House seniority and political sure-footedness are being measured as two competing constitutional lawyers and friends seek support from their colleagues, [The Hill's Mike Lillis and Mychael Schnell report](#).

President Biden and allies are working to salvage elements of major laws he signed by turning to Republicans for support. What's the strategy? Some key investments have earned bipartisan applause while helping red states with billions of dollars and tens of thousands of jobs. Republicans in some cases want to keep what their states have gained in the past four years.

"They are not going to want to undermine those jobs and those businesses that we know for the first time are really strong in so many districts around the country that have been left behind under trickle-down policies," **Lael Brainard**, the president's national economic adviser, told [The New York Times](#) during an interview.

[The Wall Street Journal](#): Trump vowed to kill Biden's climate law. Republicans say not so fast.

House Republicans plan to deliver, with Trump's backing, the second act of the GOP's 2017 Tax Cuts and Jobs Act, which lowered corporate and business taxes while making temporary cuts to individual taxes. Here's a look at big-ticket items from the more than two dozen tax laws that expire at the end of 2025 ([The Hill](#)).

[The Hill](#): Trump's stated populist goals could disrupt the GOP's business tax reform wish list.

WHEN & WHERE

- **The House** will meet at 10 a.m. **The Senate** meets at 10 a.m.
- **The president** departed Luanda, Angola, this morning, bound for Lobito, Angola, where he is scheduled to tour the Lobito Port Terminal,

visit the Carrinho Food Processing Factory and join African leaders for a group photo. Biden will participate in the Lobito Corridor Trans-Africa Summit in the afternoon before departing Angola to return to the White House, arriving Thursday.

- **Vice President Harris** is in Washington, D.C., and has no public schedule.
- **Jill Biden** departed Tuesday on [her final solo foreign trip as first lady](#), a six-day, four-country itinerary to Italy, the United Arab Emirates and Qatar. She'll end the trip in Paris among other dignitaries gathered to celebrate the reopening of Notre Dame Cathedral on Saturday.

CONTENT FROM OUR SPONSOR

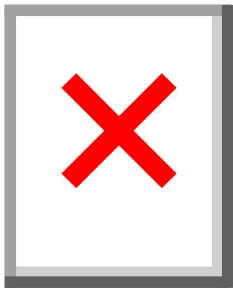
PBMs get rebates on medicines. They should share those savings with you.



PBMs get rebates that can lower the cost of some medicines by 50% or more. But you often pay full price at the pharmacy.

Congress: Medicine savings should go [to patients, not middlemen](#).

ZOOM IN

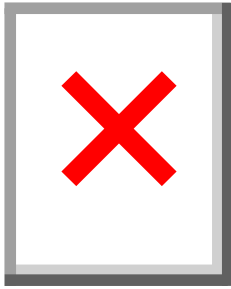


Proud Boys: Was **Shane Lamond** a “double agent” who lied to law enforcement investigators? Federal prosecutors on Tuesday accused Lamond, the former head of a Washington, D.C., police intelligence unit, of acting as a sympathizer to assist the extremist Proud Boys group prior to the Jan. 6, 2021, attack on the Capitol by sending word to leader and criminal suspect **Henry “Enrique” Tarrio** that he would be arrested. Lamond, now on trial, has denied committing any crime ([The Hill](#) and [The Washington Post](#)).

Holocaust: The Hungarian government is appealing a ruling allowing a group of Holocaust survivors to move forward in their lawsuit seeking compensation in U.S. courts ([The Hill](#)).

Supreme Court: Today, the Supreme Court hears its second major case on transgender rights, a challenge to a Tennessee law that prohibits some medical treatments for transgender youths ([The New York Times](#)).

ELSEWHERE



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MARTIAL LAW: Opposition lawmakers are pushing to impeach **South Korean** President **Yoon Suk Yeol**, after he [triggered South Korea's biggest political crisis in decades](#) late Tuesday when he abruptly declared martial law, only to backtrack six hours later after protests and a parliamentary veto. It was the first time in more than four decades that martial law had been declared in the country.

Yoon declared martial law as he accused the opposition party of engaging in “anti-state” activities in alignment with **North Korea**. Though the ruling lasted mere hours, it will have wide-reaching ramifications. Rumors had swirled for months that Yoon — whose party is in the minority in Parliament and whose approval ratings sit at 17 percent — could try to impose the rule.

A POTENTIAL PATH to a ceasefire in **Ukraine** is coming into focus as Ukrainian President **Volodymyr Zelensky** signaled concessions and

demands to end the war largely along current front lines in the east, writes [The Hill's Brad Dress](#). Zelensky last week said he was considering ceding, at least for now, territory seized by **Russia** in the nearly three-year war in return for membership into the Western security alliance NATO.

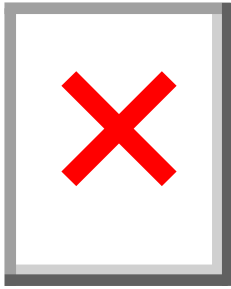
That proposal is likely to face a steep climb in negotiations with Russian President **Vladimir Putin**, who has been adamantly against Ukraine's inclusion into NATO and has used the possibility to justify the war in Ukraine. But Zelensky's proposal is somewhat vague and is seen as a starting point for relations with Trump, who last week nominated **Keith Kellogg** as special envoy to Ukraine. Kellogg, a retired lieutenant general who previously served as national security adviser to former Vice President **Mike Pence**, has offered fairly detailed proposals to end the war.

- [CNN](#): As tit-for-tat strikes strain a ceasefire between **Israel** and Hezbollah less than a week since it went into effect, Israel's defense minister on Tuesday threatened to directly target **Lebanon** should the agreement fall apart.
- [NPR](#): As Israel bans UNRWA — the United Nations refugee agency for Palestinians — Palestinians stand to lose schools and clinics, not only in **Gaza**, but also in the occupied **West Bank**.

OPINION

- **Korea's crisis is just a small part of the picture: The beneficiaries of the postwar economic order are fragmenting under increasing pressure**, by John Authers, [Bloomberg Opinion](#).
- **Can Rahm Emanuel flip the script again?** by Bret Stephens (with an interview), columnist, [The New York Times](#).

THE CLOSER



© The Associated Press | Ted S. Warren

And finally ... It's when, not if.

One day, a massive earthquake will rattle the Pacific Northwest. Minutes to hours later, a surge of seawater will swallow the land. No one knows when it'll happen, and scientists are gathering clues in hopes of getting answers.

The Cascadia Subduction Zone, where one plate of the Earth's crust dives beneath another, stretches from Northern California to Vancouver Island in Canada. The plates get stuck and build up stresses — until the day they release. The last quake in the zone was more than 300 years ago, so to understand the future risk, scientists are working to reconstruct the past.

"It's three states and two countries. And so it's challenging for everybody to be working in unison," **Valerie Sahakian**, a lead investigator for the Cascadia Region Earthquake Science Center, [told The Washington Post](#).

“For things like critical infrastructure, like dams and energy hubs, they still need the best science. What we have right now, they’ll work with. But it really isn’t good enough.”

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