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MORNING REPORT

Monday, May 12 | By Alexis Simendinger & Kristina Karisch



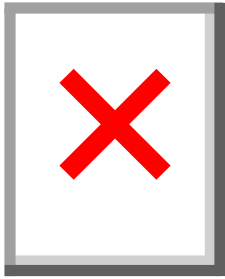
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In today's issue:

- House GOP: Big week for mammoth bill
- U.S., China unveil 90-day trade agreement
- Will Susan Collins run again in 2026?
- Trump throws wrench into Ukraine truce



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Showtime for House GOP budget

President Trump landed a short-term trade deal with China and will be in the Middle East this week to cut some deals. In the meantime, House Republicans turn to Speaker **Mike Johnson** (R-La.) to dissolve discord and deliver what is supposed to be the biggest legislative lift of the president's second term.

What happens this week and during every legislative workday before Memorial Day will reveal whether House Republicans, against long odds, can anchor Trump's pledges to cut taxes, shrink government, hike defense spending, strengthen border security and protect entitlements. The Rubik's Cube of goals, if eventually enacted without Democratic support, is supposed to serve as a vote magnet for Republican candidates next year — and a legacy builder for Trump.

“The wheels can come off multiple times in this process, and often do. In the end, we’ve got to make sure we get it back on the rails, and I think there’s enough commitment to doing that that we’ll figure it out,” Senate Majority Leader **John Thune** (R-S.D.) said after conferring with Johnson last week about House difficulties and delays. *“They’ve got a big week ahead of them,”* [he added](#).

How big? An early version of the House GOP tax provisions, intended to be the beating heart of the massive budget legislation, carries an estimated [price tag of \\$5 trillion](#), according to Congressional Budget Office calculations. That cost exceeds what is permitted by the budget resolution Republicans adopted earlier this year. In other words, the tax math still doesn’t add up.

Trump, attempting to inject some political ambiguity into debates about taxes, will escape Washington this week after suggesting that [GOP lawmakers raise taxes](#) to 39.6 percent on individuals earning more than \$2.5 million a year. He prompted immediate pushback from some House conservatives.

“Personally, I have concerns about raising any taxes,” Rep. **Darin LaHood** (R-Ill.), a member of the Ways and Means panel, told [Bloomberg TV’s “Balance of Power”](#) on Friday. *“We are focused on predictability and certainty for the economy, for long- and short-term investments. I think you do that with making these tax cuts permanent and figuring out the proper way to give rocket fuel to the economy.”*

There are two marquee committee markup sessions planned on Tuesday, which will bring behind-the-scenes GOP disagreements into sharper relief.

Lawmakers drafting the tax provisions on the [House Ways and Means Committee plan a marathon session](#) poring over a 28-page tax bill. It does not spell out how lawmakers will handle possible tax increases to help offset the budgetary cost of the Trump agenda, such as a proposed increase in a tax on college endowment investment earnings and culling green energy tax subsidies. It does not indicate how House Republicans would embrace Trump’s campaign promises to end taxes on tips, overtime pay and provide other tax breaks for middle- and lower-income working Americans.

The House Energy and Commerce Committee on Tuesday will put its calculators on display during a [markup session](#) in which its assignment is to find cuts of at least \$880 billion. The panel has authority over Medicaid, now a controversial target for shrinkage in the “big, beautiful bill” Trump wants to see emerge from the House. Text released Sunday of the proposed provisions for markup, including Medicaid, is [HERE](#).

[The Wall Street Journal](#): The House plan to cut Medicaid aims for the GOP's middle ground with work requirements and eligibility checks.

SALTY WATERS: Republican conservatives and moderates are clashing over whether to increase the current \$10,000 state and local tax deduction (SALT), potentially to \$30,000, to benefit tax filers in high-tax blue states such as New York, New Jersey and California. Four New York Republicans [issued a blistering statement](#) rejecting an offer they said came from the Speaker and the House's top tax writer.

- [The Hill](#): Senate Democrats are discussing [ways to help](#) Sen. **John Fetterman** (D-Pa.), who is navigating negative coverage about his recent volatile behavior and absences for Senate votes and committee meetings.

- [The Hill](#): Senate Majority Whip **John Barrasso** (R-Wyo.) told NBC's "Meet the Press" on Sunday he doesn't believe White House officials' suggested suspension of habeas corpus will come to Congress. Here's [what that idea would mean](#).



Smart Take
with **Blake Burman**

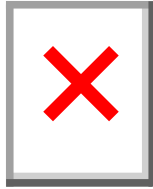
If you're curious about what's in the skies — especially UFOs — this week could turn into a newsy one.

Rep. **Eric Burlison** (R- Mo.) told NewsNation a congressional hearing is coming and says this week will be *"the most focused and intense UAP/UFO investigation week that I've had."*

Burlison sits on the House Oversight and Government Reform Committee and recently hired UFO whistleblower **David Grusch** to advise on the topic. Grusch has alleged the Pentagon is operating a secret UFO retrieval program.

"This is where the opportunity will come for the members of Congress to actually hear properly, for the first time, the full details of what David Grusch knows," **Ross Coulthart**, NewsNation special correspondent and host of "Reality Check," told me.

In our [NewsNation/Decision Desk HQ poll](#), 44 percent of Americans said they believe the government is hiding UFO information. With a number that high, you're not going to see these kinds of questions from Congress go away anytime soon.



Burman hosts "The Hill" weeknights, 6p/5c on NewsNation.

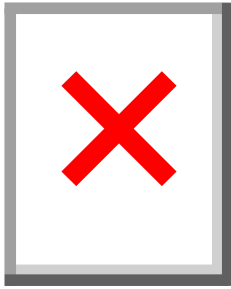


3 Things to Know Today

1. Debate swirls around Trump's challenge to automatic birthright citizenship as the [Supreme Court prepares to hear oral arguments](#) on Thursday.
2. A group of 49 white South Africans [departed for the U.S. on Sunday](#) on a private charter plane. They were offered refugee status by the Trump administration under a new program announced in February.
3. Educators are working to [combat artificial intelligence challenges in the classroom](#).

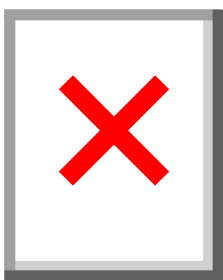
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LEADING THE DAY



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U.S., CHINA REACH TEMPORARY TRADE ACCORD: The U.S. and China [announced today that they reached an agreement](#) to temporarily reduce the steep tariffs they have imposed on each other in an attempt to defuse the trade war threatening the world's two largest economies. [Under the 90-day agreement](#), the U.S. would reduce the tariff on Chinese imports to 30 percent from 145 percent, while China would lower its import duty on American goods to 10 percent from 125 percent. China also [said it would suspend or cancel](#) its "non-tariff countermeasures."

Trump's 145 percent tariffs on Chinese imports virtually halted \$600 billion in annual trade between the world's two largest economies. The tariffs were already disrupting the world's supply chains, and many U.S. businesses are weighing how much they can [increase prices](#) to help offset the tariff costs. Economists have warned that the trade dispute will slow [global growth](#) and fuel inflation, potentially tipping the United States into a recession.

“It’s important to understand how quickly we were able to come to agreement, which reflects that perhaps the differences were not so large as maybe thought,” U.S. Trade Representative **Jamieson Greer** said Sunday from Geneva in brief remarks to reporters. *“That being said, there was a lot of groundwork that went into these two days.”*

- [Bloomberg News](#): Global stocks climbed after the 90-day pause announcement.
- [The Hill](#): Trump’s tariffs threaten to become his Achilles’ heel.
- [The Hill](#): Commerce Secretary **Howard Lutnick** said Sunday that the U.S. anticipates “a 10 percent baseline tariff to be in place for the foreseeable future” for countries across the globe amid trade tensions.

HIGH-FLYING DEAL: Trump will embark on the first major foreign trip of his second term tomorrow, heading to Saudi Arabia, Qatar and the United Arab Emirates. The Middle East trip is expected to focus heavily on business deals and new investments from the oil-rich region. Typically, U.S. presidents travel to Canada or Mexico first. Trump’s trip to the Middle East, by contrast, highlights the region’s growing influence — [and the president’s tension](#) with many longtime allies.

With an eye on blockbuster deals and a Nobel-worthy diplomatic breakthrough in regional peace, Trump is focusing on a region that he has treated as a key diplomatic and economic player in his second term. It’s also a business opportunity: All [three countries on the list](#) have Trump-branded properties or ongoing developments.

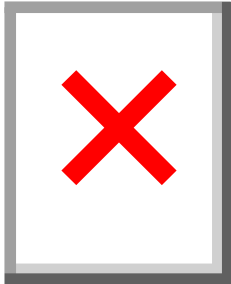
While in the region, Trump [plans to accept a luxury Boeing 747-800](#) plane as a donation from the Qatari royal family that will be upgraded to serve as Air Force One, in possibly the biggest foreign gift ever received by the U.S. government. The plane [will then be donated](#) to Trump’s presidential library when he leaves office, allowing him to continue using it as a private citizen.

WHEN & WHERE

- **The House** will meet Tuesday at noon.
- **The Senate** will convene at 3 p.m.
- **The president** will hold a news conference at 9:30 a.m. with Health and Human Services Secretary **Robert F. Kennedy Jr.** in the Roosevelt Room. Trump will depart the White House at 10:05 a.m. and begin traveling to Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, arriving on Tuesday.

- **Secretary of State Marco Rubio** will accompany the president to Saudi Arabia and Qatar on an itinerary through Wednesday.

ZOOM IN



© Associated Press | Ben Curtis

POLITICS: Maine Republican Sen. **Susan Collins**, 72, is taking unofficial steps toward reelection, as some big-name Dems consider a 2026 race. In [an interview with CNN](#), Collins signaled she does plan to run but wasn't ready to say so officially.

"It's certainly my inclination to run and I'm preparing to do so," Collins said last week. "I very much enjoy serving the people of Maine. I've obviously not made a formal announcement because it's too early for that."

Maryland Gov. Wes Moore (D) is taking steps to build his national profile even as he seeks to tamp down speculation that he could run for the White House next cycle. Moore [told ABC's "The View"](#) last week that he's "not running" for the White House in 2028. But his recent swings through key states are keeping the spotlight on the rising Democratic star, who's also staring down reelection as governor in 2026.

"He's doing very little to discourage that speculation about 2028. ... His schedule was at odds with his message," Maryland-based Democratic strategist Len Foxwell said.

In **New York**, Rep. **Mike Lawler** (R) is facing a difficult decision as he weighs whether to run for governor, potentially putting him up against Rep. **Elise Stefanik** (R), who is considering her own run to lead the state. Lawler seemed just a few weeks ago to be the favorite for the GOP nomination as Republicans look to unseat unpopular incumbent Gov. **Kathy Hochul** (D). But [that now appears up in the air](#), and Trump has weighed in to urge Lawler to run again for his House seat.

- [The Hill](#): Transportation Secretary **Sean Duffy** told NBC's "Meet the Press" on Sunday that the government will extend the retirement age for air traffic controllers among its responses to safety worries for aircraft at congested airports. *"I'm going to give them a 20 percent upfront bonus to stay on the job. Don't retire. Keep serving your country.' And these are the best guys,"* he said.
- [The Washington Post](#): Newark Liberty International Airport saw more delays Sunday due to an equipment outage that necessitated a 45-minute ground stop.
- [The Hill](#): Trump's second choice for U.S. surgeon general set off a wave of infighting between prominent figures in the MAGA and "Make America Healthy Again" spaces as allies of both Trump and Health and Human Services Secretary **Robert F. Kennedy Jr.** denounced the health tech entrepreneur nominated for the role.
- [The Hill](#): Trump's firing of the director of the Federal Emergency Management Agency last week plunged the disaster agency into uncertainty.

OMB: The Trump administration is facing pressure to restore a government website that detailed spending decisions by the administration that lawmakers on both sides say is required by law. For weeks, advocates and Democrats have ratcheted up criticism over a move by the Office of Management and Budget to take down the online database. But that doesn't mean Trump officials aren't also hearing from Republicans about the tracker's removal.

“It’s the law. It’s a requirement of the law, so it’s not discretionary on OMB’s part,” Collins [told The Hill](#) on Thursday. She also said that top appropriators had “not heard back” yet from the OMB after a letter, first [reported by The New York Times](#) this week, in which top appropriators from both parties in the House and Senate urged public access to the site be restored.

[The Hill](#): Liberals rail at establishment: “Too many corporate, establishment politicians.”

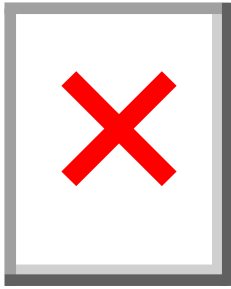
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ELSEWHERE



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UKRAINE: Trump urged **Ukrainian** leaders Sunday to agree to meet with **Russian** President **Vladimir Putin** in **Turkey** this week to negotiate an end to the three-year conflict. Trump's urging came after Putin [on Sunday proposed direct talks](#) with Ukraine this Thursday in Istanbul *"to achieve the restoration of a long-term, lasting peace."*

Russia also launched drone attacks on Kyiv just hours after Putin proposed the talks. Putin's announcement came as Ukraine and its European allies [are upping their pressure on Moscow](#) to accept terms for a 30-day ceasefire that would begin as early as today.

Ukrainian Foreign Minister **Andrii Sybiha** said Saturday that leaders of **France**, **Germany**, the **United Kingdom** and **Poland** — a partnership dubbed the "Coalition of the Willing" — met in Kyiv with Ukraine's President **Volodymyr Zelensky** to discuss terms for a temporary pause in

fighting. Trump also joined the meeting by phone, where the world leaders discussed “peace efforts.”

But with Putin’s announcement, weeks of what appeared to be [Trump’s thawing relations](#) with Zelensky and impatience with Moscow [are once again in question](#). Zelensky eagerly accepted the offer Sunday, [urging Putin to meet him in Turkey](#), but only under a ceasefire.

[The Hill](#): Former national security adviser **John Bolton** said that Putin may be at risk of “overplaying his hand” with Trump amid the talks to end the Kremlin’s invasion of Ukraine.

BACK FROM THE BRINK: Following four days of escalating attacks, **India** and **Pakistan** have seemingly agreed to a truce. Trump [on Saturday morning signaled](#) that the two countries agreed to a “full and immediate” ceasefire following a slew of tit-for-tat strikes, with some targeting military bases. But the underlying tensions remain, [leading experts to conclude](#) there’s little to suggest that the truce represents any return to old patterns of restraint.

“After a long night of talks mediated by the United States, I am pleased to announce that India and Pakistan have agreed to a FULL AND IMMEDIATE CEASEFIRE,” he wrote on Truth Social. *“Congratulations to both Countries on using Common Sense and Great Intelligence. Thank you for your attention to this matter!”*

“NEVER AGAIN WAR”: Pope Leo XIV [called for a genuine and just peace](#) in Ukraine and an immediate ceasefire in **Gaza** in his first Sunday noon blessing as pontiff. He noted that it was almost 80 years to the day that the “immense tragedy” of World War II ended and quoted **Pope Francis**, his predecessor, who often referred to the current wave of violence globally as *“a third world war in pieces.”*

“I carry in my heart the sufferings of the beloved Ukrainian people,” he said. *“Let everything possible be done to achieve genuine, just and lasting peace as soon as possible.”*

In his remarks, Leo [called for an immediate truce](#) in Gaza, and for humanitarian relief to be provided to the *“exhausted civilian population and all hostages be freed.”*

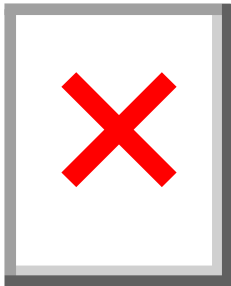
- [NBC News](#): Disagreements on **Iran** and Gaza are straining Trump’s relationship with Israeli Prime Minister **Benjamin Netanyahu**.
- [PBS](#): Israeli airstrikes kill 23 people in Gaza as international outcry over aid blockade grows.

- [The New York Times](#): Hamas says it will free **Edan Alexander**, 21, the last living American citizen held captive in Gaza as early as today. U.S. officials negotiated directly with Hamas leaders to secure Alexander's release, breaking with the traditional U.S. boycott of the group.

OPINION

- **Qatar's gift to Trump reveals a loophole big enough to fly a jumbo jet through**, by Jacob T. Levy, guest essayist, [The Washington Post](#).
- **Pope Leo XIV may be a stern teacher for American Catholics**, by Sam Sawyer SJ, guest essayist, [The New York Times](#).

THE CLOSER



And finally ... ♥ Many mothers in the U.S. celebrated their special day on Sunday with brunch, flowers, phone calls and perhaps greeting cards with stamps on them. But there's always an offbeat marketing salute in the headlines, and you can't make this one up.

In Alaska, a favorite Mother's Day tradition involved getting up close and personal with a species that survived the ice age: musk ox. All moms on Sunday received a daisy and free admission at the Musk Ox Farm in Palmer, Alaska, about an hour's drive north of Anchorage. Also a draw was an old bull named Trebek, named after the late "Jeopardy!" host **Alex Trebek**, a benefactor of the facility.

"Who doesn't want to celebrate Mother's Day with a musk ox mom and the most adorable calf you're ever going to find in your life?" **Mark Austin**, the farm's executive director, [told The Associated Press](#).

The offbeat rationale: Mother's Day for the Palmer farm is the traditional start of the summer season and marks its 1964 launch.

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