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MORNING REPORT

Monday, March 24 | By Alexis Simendinger & Kristina Karisch

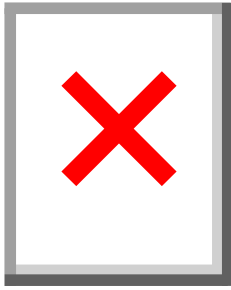
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In today's issue:

- Congress is back. Now what?
- Courts juggle Trump, DOGE challenges
- U.S. kicks off Ukraine talks with Russia
- Gauging 2028 Democrats? Voters have ideas

TRUMP FIRST 100 DAYS



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Trump's next hurdles demand GOP unity

Lawmakers are back in the Capitol this week with big ambitions, a messy calendar and a thousand potential trip wires, especially among Republicans who call the shots.

House Republicans have spoken optimistically about enacting **President Trump's** ambitious [tax agenda with details still to be ironed out by next month](#). They insist GOP lawmakers can advance a compromise budget resolution to keep pace with the party's aggressive timeline.

Republicans want to move fast to write a budget that can pass with a simple majority under reconciliation rules. Each step — selecting tax and spending specifics, budget rules to avert a filibuster, calculating a budget “score” to meet those rules and getting House and Senate Republicans to agree with one another and with Trump — poses hazards.

Republican senators predict Trump's agenda will be slowed by [internal party divisions](#). Among the major hurdles: tax cuts, Medicaid and defense spending.

"I would not do severe cuts to Medicaid," Sen. **Josh Hawley** (R-Mo.) said last month, referring to House Republicans' idea to make the 10-year budget math work in their favor by cutting the federal-state health program for the poor. And he's not alone. West Virginia Sen. **Jim Justice** (R) has acknowledged his state's heavy reliance on Medicaid, as have [House colleagues representing other states](#).

[The Associated Press](#): **Veronica Taylor** of Kimball, W.Va., is an example of Americans who say they will struggle with the administration's announced switch from Social Security phone services to in-person and computer assistance.

Senate Majority Leader **John Thune** (R-S.D.) recently cautioned GOP colleagues that the upper chamber is unlikely to approve Trump's border security, energy and tax agenda until July, at the earliest, and some Republican senators warn the drama could drag well into the fall. From Thune's vantage point, the brisk timeline advertised by his GOP colleagues on the other side of the Capitol is unrealistic.

Much of Washington's attention has focused on the rocky path Trump's agenda faces in the House, where Speaker **Mike Johnson's** (R-La.) slim majority means he can only lose one GOP vote and still pass GOP legislation. Syncing the approaches of the two chambers will take time.

SCISSORS WITH PERMISSION? Separately, lawmakers are weighing Trump's interest in impounding funding already approved by Congress. Clawing back funding approved by the legislative branch does not sit well with some Republicans on Capitol Hill, which is why Sen. **Rand Paul** (R-Ky.) said he pitched **Elon Musk**, the president's federal downsizing adviser, on an alternative Paul favors that requires congressional blessing. The senator suggested Trump could try to quietly lobby some key Republicans to overcome their misgivings about rescissions, which require approval by Congress. *"But can we get all the Republicans, is the real question?"* Paul added.

Paul predicted during a Sunday interview with [CBS's "Face the Nation"](#) that the debate involving which branch has say-so over spending will end up before the Supreme Court. It's another reason the calendar could begin to crawl as Republicans try to move faster this year.

"I think the Trump administration believes they can just not spend it," Paul said of funds Congress has already approved. *"There's another question within the question: Can the president and his people — can Secretary [of*

*State **Marco] Rubio** — pause the spending? On that issue I think they will win,” the senator continued.*

He predicted the administration could prevail in the high court if Trump opts to “pause” congressionally approved spending, as long as that executive move does not extend beyond the end of an appropriations year. *“If you get through that, I believe it's impoundment and I think the court so far has said it has to come back [to Congress],”* Paul said.

There are signs that Republicans in Congress are becoming more uneasy about some decisions attributed to the Department of Government Efficiency (DOGE), as well as a pileup of court challenges testing Trump’s policies. The president and his top advisers say they’re eager to nudge such court challenges up to the Supreme Court.

[The Hill](#): The GOP grapples with mounting frustration over DOGE cuts.

THIRD RAIL: Musk and DOGE say they want to close some Social Security offices and [curtail some telephone services](#) at a time when the billionaire has used prominent interviews to bash Social Security as wasteful and “a Ponzi scheme” — opinions that some Republican lawmakers join Democrats in criticizing. Social Security is considered the “third rail” in partisan politics, and Trump campaigned with promises not to touch the government’s most popular program.

[The Wall Street Journal](#): DOGE cuts Social Security Administration staff and restricts services.

Meanwhile, Democrats are salivating as Musk voices his opinions during interviews and provides material that could politically benefit the minority party.

“The more of these Musk interviews, the more discussion we’ll have. I think the entire 2026 campaign will be a referendum on Musk” if the billionaire’s poll numbers continue to drop, a GOP lawmaker, speaking without attribution, told [NBC News](#). *“You will see ad after ad with the chainsaw,”* referring to Musk’s [performance in front of conservatives last month](#) while wielding a shiny red chainsaw and dressed in dark glasses.

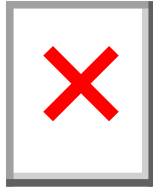

Smart Take
with **Blake**
Burman

In the midst of federal staffing cuts, there’s been at least one new hire on Capitol Hill. Rep. **Eric Burlison** (R-Mo.) [tells NewsNation](#) he is hiring UFO whistleblower **David Grusch** as a senior adviser.

Grusch, who once testified that the Pentagon is operating a secret UFO retrieval program, is set to advise for at least the next four months.

Rep. **Tim Burchett** (R-Tenn.), who helped stand up the Unidentified Anomalous Phenomena Caucus, told me, *"I think he can help us ask questions that need to be asked, that should be asked, that maybe we're not asking the right questions because we're not supposed experts on this."*

Burchett told me he has yet to talk to Defense Secretary **Pete Hegseth** about UFOs. Watch to see which questions keep coming, as the public is curious about answers as well.



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



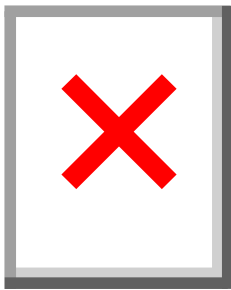
3 Things to Know Today

1. An experimental treatment [appears to delay Alzheimer's symptoms](#) in some people genetically destined to get the disease in their 40s or

50s, according to new findings. Nearly 7 million people are living with Alzheimer's in the U.S.

2. **Pope Francis**, 88, left a Rome hospital on [Sunday](#) after five weeks of treatment for pneumonia and other respiratory issues.
3. The president's sector-specific tariffs are unlikely to take effect on April 2 but his announced "reciprocal" tariffs on major trading partners are still planned on that date, [The Wall Street Journal](#) and [Bloomberg News](#) report.

LEADING THE DAY



COURTS: Trump's unprecedented flex of executive power has sent legal challengers scrambling to the courts to pump the brakes, but some of the

president's more extraordinary actions have been difficult to confront, [writes The Hill's Ella Lee](#). The administration is barreling forward with an act-first, defend-later approach to its policy agenda, and more than 100 lawsuits have been filed as a result. They oppose everything from Trump's executive actions to the ways his administration has sought to implement them. The lawsuits span the president's crackdown on law firms; diversity, equity and inclusion initiatives; gender; controversial immigration and deportation policies; and DOGE's efforts to slim down the federal government.

"We were looking for any mechanism that would, so to speak, stop the trains here," **Andrew Goldfarb**, a lawyer representing challengers to DOGE's takeover of the U.S. Institute of Peace, said at a recent hearing. *"Anything to stop the destruction that is going on."*

Then there's the battle with the courts over deportation flights, after administration officials on March 15 [rebuffed an oral order](#) from U.S. District Court Judge **James Boasberg** to turn around or halt flights of Venezuelan migrants headed to a Salvadoran prison.

[CBS News](#): Paul said on "Face the Nation" that amid the "huge legal challenges" to the Trump administration's deportation operations, he believes the Supreme Court will ultimately uphold the Alien Enemies Act.

The White House's no-holds-barred challenges to the federal government, and increasingly the judiciary, have put Trump on a collision course with Supreme Court Chief Justice **John Roberts**, [The Hill's Zach Schonfeld reports](#). Roberts last week offered a rare rebuke of the president after Trump suggested a sitting judge should be impeached. Now, the trail ahead appears rougher as the ever-intensifying barrage of litigation against the Trump administration creeps closer to the Supreme Court.

[The Hill's The Memo](#): The major law firm of Paul, Weiss, Rifkind, Wharton & Garrison (called Paul, Weiss), targeted by Trump in an executive order, opted to mollify rather than confront the president. In short, it backed down. Democrats, as well as many lawyers, are grappling with the implications.

EDUCATION: Defenders of the Department of Education are turning to the courts to save it after Trump signed an executive order to abolish it. On Friday, the president said he would move some of its most critical loan programs to the Small Business Administration. Trump cannot abolish the department without an act of Congress, and it is not clear legislation doing so could pass both chambers, though it will be introduced by Sen. **Bill Cassidy** (R-La.).

"I expect that any actions to shutter the agency or to dismantle it will be challenged in the courts, and those challenges will prevail," **Julie**

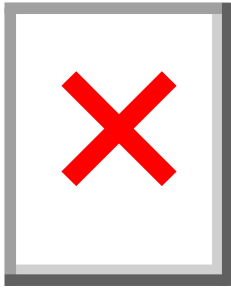
Margetta Morgan, a former deputy under secretary of Education during the Biden administration, [told The Hill's Lexi Lonas Cochran](#). *"I think the other thing to think about here is that the decision to dismantle the Department of Education is incredibly unpopular, and people need to continue to voice their concerns about that and their displeasure with the Trump administration's efforts and to hold policymakers accountable."*

- [The Hill](#): Pro-Palestinian activists are facing an alarming new era in the U.S. as the Trump administration steps up efforts to crack down on views it deems dangerous, including positions sympathetic to their movement.
- [The Hill](#): On Sunday, Education Secretary **Linda McMahon** told CNN the administration and Columbia University are on the "right track" to unfreeze \$400 million in federal support withdrawn by the White House because of campus protests last year.

WHEN & WHERE

- **The House** will meet at noon.
- **The Senate** will convene at 3 p.m.
- **The president** will deliver remarks in the Roosevelt Room at 2 p.m. with Louisiana Gov. **Jeff Landry** (R), a member of his Council of Governors. Trump will participate at 3 p.m. in a Greek Independence Day event at the White House.

ZOOM IN



© The Associated Press | Kenny Holston, The New York Times

POLITICS: As Democrats look toward 2028 and their next chance to retake the White House, former Vice President **Kamala Harris** is widely favored as a possible candidate. The 2024 Democratic nominee has the support of 36 percent of Democratic voters and Democratic-leaning independents eligible to participate in the 2028 primary, according to [a new survey from Morning Consult](#).

Trailing Harris is former Transportation Secretary **Pete Buttigieg**, who holds 10 percent support and announced recently that he will not run for statewide office in Michigan in 2026. No other candidate on the list achieved double-digit support, and 13 percent of possible primary voters remain undecided. Minnesota Gov. **Tim Walz** (D), Harris's 2024 running mate; Rep. **Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez** (D-N.Y.); and California Gov. **Gavin Newsom** (D) each have 5 percent of support.

Ocasio-Cortez, one of the leading Democratic voices opposing Trump, [has made headlines in recent weeks](#) as a possible 2028 contender. She has been holding rallies and town halls in several states alongside Sen. **Bernie Sanders** (I-Vt.) as part of a “Fighting Oligarchy” tour aimed at rallying Democrats, drawing high turnout. [The Hill’s Julia Manchester reports](#) that her high profile and vocal criticism of the party’s status quo positions her as someone who could fill what critics say is a leadership vacuum within the party.

*“Some of the most effective, strategic and responsive leadership happening in this moment is coming from Rep. Ocasio-Cortez, and she’s doing it better than many Democrats that we see nationally,” said **Abbas Alawieh**, a senior progressive strategist. “She is reminding the party what real leadership that is responsive to the energy of movements actually looks like.”*

SCHUMER ON DEFENSE: Under fire from some progressives to step aside for a new generation and struggling to effectively channel rising Democratic opposition to Trump administration policies, Senate Minority Leader **Chuck Schumer** (D-N.Y.) told [NBC’s “Meet the Press”](#) on Sunday that the country is experiencing a constitutional crisis because of what he said are the president’s “lawless” actions. Schumer repeated he [will not step down](#) as Senate Democratic leader.

Trump “*thinks he should be king*,” the [senator said](#). “*He thinks he should do whatever he wants, regardless of the law.*” It is a warning Democrats raised about Trump before losing the presidential election in November. Democrats in Congress appear busier fighting among one another about whether they’re actively opposing the administration’s policies than debating which tacks to take.

- [The Hill](#): Rep. **Ro Khanna** (D-Calif.), interviewed on CNN on Sunday and asked about Schumer, said Democrats are “fed up with the old guard.”
- [The Hill](#): Walz reemerges as a Democratic fighter with shots aimed at Musk.
- [Politico](#): A review of Quinnipiac University’s annual first-quarter congressional polling reveals that, for the first time in the poll’s history, congressional Democrats are underwater with their own voters in approval ratings.
- [The New York Times](#): Rep. **Nancy Pelosi** (D-Calif.) has represented San Francisco in Congress for nearly four decades. Challengers are lining up as she weighs running again or retiring.

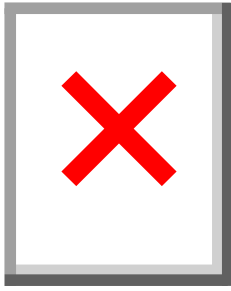
□ Meanwhile, Newsom is getting plenty of publicity for his new podcast, not necessarily positive. The [San Francisco Chronicle reports in an opinion piece](#) that the financial arrangements making the podcast possible are murky.

Newsom, a likely 2028 candidate, infuriated progressives in recent weeks by hosting conservatives on his podcast and breaking with his party on transgender athletes in women's sports. National Republicans, however, are paying attention. **David Kochel**, a longtime Iowa Republican strategist, [told Politico](#) *"the operative class is definitely watching him because he's doing something very different."*

[The New Yorker commentary](#): What Newsom's embarrassing podcast suggests about the Democratic Party.

Big-name Democrats eyeing higher office could hinder the party's hopes to regain the House in 2026, [write The Hill's Mike Lillis and Emily Brooks](#). A number of vulnerable House Democrats are eyeing runs for the Senate or other offices in a handful of states around the country. If they do make the leap, they would vacate tough House seats, eliminate the Democrats' advantage of incumbency, and force party campaign operatives to recruit new candidates — and spend more money — to keep those districts in the next Congress.

ELSEWHERE



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CANADA: New Canadian Prime Minister **Mark Carney** [called a snap election on Sunday](#), saying he needs a mandate from Canadians to take on Trump. Carney, who won the Liberal Party elections earlier this month to replace **Justin Trudeau**, announced Canadians will head to the polls on April 28. At the start of the year, the Liberal Party [was worried it was about to be wiped out](#) from Parliament. But Trump overturned the political landscape to the extent that most national opinion polls currently favor the Liberals to win.

“President Trump claims that Canada isn’t a real country. He wants to break us so America can own us. We will not let that happen,” Carney said in Ottawa. *“We’re over the shock of the betrayal, but we should never forget the lessons.”*

- [NPR](#): Some European countries, as well as Canada, are warning their citizens who travel to the U.S. to strictly follow the country's entry rules or

risk detention.

- [CNN](#): **Greenland's** prime minister said a planned visit by U.S. officials, including second lady **Usha Vance**, is “highly aggressive,” plunging relations to a new low after Trump vowed to annex the autonomous Danish territory.

UKRAINE: Delegations from the U.S. and **Russia** [will meet today to talk](#) about how to end the three-year war in **Ukraine**. The meeting comes after Ukrainian and U.S. officials [began talks on Sunday](#) on proposals to safeguard energy facilities and critical infrastructure. The meeting in **Saudi Arabia** came as U.S. special envoy **Steve Witkoff** expressed optimism about the chances for ending the war that resulted from Russia's full-scale invasion in 2022. Ahead of the talks, Witkoff [echoed some of the Kremlin's main talking points](#), while advocating for future U.S.-Russian relations based on shared business interests.

Trump has focused on a limited ceasefire in the Ukraine war as he seeks to get the ball rolling on broader peace talks between Moscow and Kyiv. [The Hill's Laura Kelly breaks down](#) five things to know ahead of the talks.

- [Bloomberg News](#): The U.S. hopes for a Ukraine peace deal but Russian President **Vladimir Putin** is in no hurry.
- [Forbes](#): The Trump administration's envoy handling the Russia-Ukraine conflict downplayed concerns about Putin on Sunday.
- [The Economist](#): Trump is a problem for Europe's most important hard-right leaders.
- [The New York Times](#): **British** Prime Minister **Keir Starmer** on Putin, Trump and Europe's challenge: “*We've known this moment was coming.*”
- [The Washington Post](#): Trump's turbulence is leading some allies to rethink their reliance on U.S. weapons.

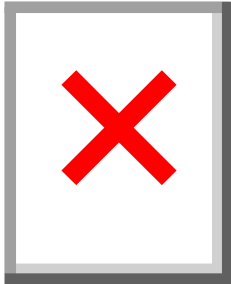
GAZA: **Israeli** forces are pushing back into **Gaza** [after a two-month ceasefire with Hamas](#), where the death toll has surpassed 50,000. Political and military leaders are now considering plans for a new ground campaign that could include a military occupation of the entire enclave for months or more. The Israeli military [said on Sunday that it was ordering mass evacuations](#) of Palestinians from southern Gaza, where many had just returned to their homes after months of being displaced by the fighting.

[The Associated Press](#): Officials say **Egypt** has introduced a new proposal to try and get the Israel-Hamas ceasefire back on track.

OPINION

- **It's Trump vs. the courts, and it won't end well for Trump**, by J. Michael Luttig, guest essayist, [The New York Times](#).
- **The war on diversity is also a war on veterans**, by Jos Joseph, opinion contributor, [The Hill](#).

THE CLOSER



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And finally ... Snoopy is France's newest fashion icon. It's been 75 years since American illustrator **Charles Schulz** introduced the cartoon crew of Snoopy, Charlie Brown and the Peanuts comic strip. Now, everyone's favorite beagle [is getting the high-fashion treatment in Paris](#), where a new

exhibition charts his emergence as a style icon, embraced by designers from streetwear brands to couture houses.

Très chic!

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