

The Committee investigating the January 6 insurrection at the United States Capitol holds public hearings. Inflation, President Biden's "top economic priority," continues to present a challenge. The United States pours additional weapons and resources into Ukraine as the war marks its 100th day. The gun debate heats up after a series of mass shootings. Senate negotiators are running out of time to strike a deal on a reconciliation package containing Biden's social spending and climate change priorities.

January 6 Committee Holds First Public Hearings

On June 9, the United States House Select Committee on the January 6 Attack, led by Chairman Bennie Thompson (D-MS) and vice-chair Liz Cheney (R-WY), held the first of several public hearings into the attack on the United States Capitol. Since the Committee was formed last summer, they have interviewed hundreds of witnesses and examined thousands of hours of video footage and over 140,000 pages of documents. [More than 800 people](#) have been arrested and charged for crimes related to the events of January 6 on charges ranging from trespassing to seditious conspiracy. [The dramatic June 9 hearing](#) heard from Nick Quested, a documentary filmmaker, and Caroline Edwards, a Capitol Police officer injured during the insurrection, and featured [video clips](#) of testimony from former Trump officials, aides, and [members of Trump's family](#). The Committee also revealed that [multiple Members of Congress sought presidential pardons](#) for their roles in the January 6 insurrection and attempts to overturn the results of the 2020 presidential election. The Committee will hold additional public hearings over the coming weeks that will focus on issues such as President Trump's effort to install a loyalist at the top of the United States Department of Justice, the pressure campaign directed at former Vice President Mike Pence and state-level officials, and the encouragement and incitement of supporters, including far-right and militia groups, to come to Washington with premeditated plans to attack the Capitol. The Committee's investigation is still ongoing, and they plan to release their final report in September, ahead of the midterm elections.

Inflation Continues to Trouble Biden and Risks of Recession Rise

Inflation continues to plague the Biden administration. The latest [Consumer Price Index](#) indicated that inflation rose to 8.6 percent in May, a 40-year high. On May 30, in a [Wall Street Journal](#) op-ed, the President outlined a three-part plan to address inflation, which he described as his "top economic priority." This comes after Biden [tasked advisors](#) to create a more compelling message and a sharper strategy on the economy, and marked the beginning of an aggressive campaign to reshape the narrative. The President suffers from sinking poll numbers and an increasingly negative outlook on the November mid-term elections.

To demonstrate that he is taking action on inflation, the President [met with Federal Reserve Chairman Jerome Powell](#) in the Oval Office on May 31 to discuss the challenge and how to slow rapidly rising prices. Last month, the Federal Reserve announced the largest interest rate hike in more than 20 years and outlined plans to trim its balance sheet to counter inflation. On June 1, Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen said that the administration misjudged the threat inflation posed a year ago when the message was that this would be "transitory." Secretary Yellen told CNN's Wolf Blitzer that "there have been unanticipated and large shocks to the economy that have boosted energy and food prices" and that the administration didn't appreciate

the full effects at the time. Experts are now sounding the alarm about the risks of a recession. Former Treasury Secretary Larry Summers recently [remarked](#) that whenever inflation has risen above 4% and unemployment has dipped below 4%—two thresholds that, when breached, indicate economic overheating—America has suffered a recession within two years.

More Arms for Ukraine as War Passes 100-Day Mark

The United States and allies continue to pour military and humanitarian assistance into Ukraine as the war marked its 100th day on June 4. Congress approved a \$40 billion assistance package for Ukraine, more than the \$33 billion requested by President Biden, which includes funding for military, economic, and humanitarian assistance to Kyiv, NATO allies, and partners supporting Ukraine. Since the start of the war, the United States has approved [\\$53 billion](#) in assistance. President Biden sought to clarify America’s interests and goals in an op-ed in the [New York Times](#) following weeks of debate and concerns over U.S. intentions and policy. In the post, the President said, “We want to see a democratic, independent, sovereign and prosperous Ukraine with the means to deter and defend itself against further aggression.” That messaging contrasts with statements from senior administration officials such as Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin that the United States [“want\[s\] to see Russia weakened to the degree that it can’t do the kinds of things that it has done in invading Ukraine.”](#) and Assistant Secretary of Defense for International Security Affairs Celeste Wallander that the objective is Russian [“strategic failure.”](#) Regarding lethal assistance, the President said that the United States “will provide the Ukrainians with more advanced rocket systems and munitions that will enable them to more precisely strike key targets on the battlefield in Ukraine.” The U.S. will continue sending advanced weapons such as the Javelin anti-tank missiles, Stinger anti-aircraft missiles, and unmanned aerial vehicles, Mi-17 helicopters and ammunition. Notably, the latest arms package includes sending the [Guided Multiple Launch Rocket System](#), precision-guided rockets that can hit targets upwards of 50 miles away.

Mass Shootings Reignite Gun Debate

Mass shootings have reignited the gun debate in America. On May 14, a mass shooting at a grocery store in Buffalo, NY, killed ten and injured three; on May 24, a mass shooting at a grade school in Uvalde, Texas, killed 21, including 19 grade-school children under the age of 11; on June 4 a shooting in Philadelphia, PA killed three and injured 12. In an impassioned speech on the Senate floor hours after the Uvalde shooting, Connecticut Senator Chris Murphy, whose advocacy for gun control was spurred by the murder of over twenty children in Sandy Hook, CT, in 2014, begged his Senate colleagues to act. According to data compiled by the [Gun Violence Archive](#), since the start of the year through June 5, 248 mass shootings in America have left scores dead. Since the 1999 mass shooting at Columbine High School in Colorado, over [300 instances](#) of gun violence at schools exposed over 300,000 students to gun violence. The last time the federal government managed to pass laws that limit the spread and use of guns in the United States was in [1994](#).

The same week at the Uvalde massacre, the National Rifle Association (NRA) gathered less than 300 miles away in Houston, Texas, for their annual leadership conference—but the sides of the debate are much further apart, and the distance is seemingly irreconcilable. Addressing the

masses in Houston, former [President Donald Trump](#) rejected new gun restrictions and instead called for increased mental health services and school security measures. Texas Senator Ted Cruz also dismissed calls for new restrictions and warned of alleged Democratic plots to take weapons.

The House [passed gun control legislation](#) on June 8 that raises the minimum age for the purchase of most semi-automatic rifles, bans high-capacity ammunition magazines, and cracks down on gun trafficking. The measure passed along party lines and stands no chance of passage in the Senate. In the upper chamber, a small bipartisan group of Senators, led by Senator Chris Murphy (D-CT), are [negotiating a legislative package](#) that could include the first significant new federal restrictions on guns in three decades. Past efforts to pass gun control legislation following similar violent episodes have not been successful, and these efforts will likely prove quixotic.

Clock Running Out in Reconciliation – Global Corporate Tax Deal in Limbo

Time is running out for the Senate to negotiate a sweeping reconciliation bill containing many of the President's climate and social spending priorities. The House passed a roughly [\\$2 trillion social policy and climate measure](#) in November. Since then, negotiations in the Senate, centered around West Virginia Senator Joe Manchin, have waxed and waned, and Democrats cannot pass the legislation without Manchin's support due to united Republican opposition in the evenly divided 50-50 Senate. Many are concerned that time is short before Congress turns its attention to the midterm campaign. Observers view June as the final opportunity to negotiate a reconciliation bill and pass the measure before the August recess. Under negotiation are investments in climate change and clean energy and social spending measures to lower the cost of childcare, eldercare, and healthcare, among other issues.

The House-passed reconciliation package includes [measures to implement the 15 percent global minimum tax agreement](#) brokered by the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) last fall. The deal sets a minimum 15 percent tax rate for global corporations and includes measures to eliminate tax-havens. Treasury officials have stated that the global minimum tax deal is a priority for the administration and one of their biggest international accomplishments. Should negotiations on the larger reconciliation package fail, which looks increasingly likely, there could be a compromise on a smaller package that would consist primarily of clean-energy investments, prescription drug reform, and international tax provisions. Guidelines for the 130 countries who signed onto the agreement to put compliant tax policies in place aim for a start date of 2023, but that timeline appears to be slipping.

Personnel Updates

Department of Agriculture – **Stacy Dean** is the nominee for undersecretary of food nutrition and consumer services. **Alexis Taylor** is the nominee for undersecretary for trade and foreign agriculture affairs.

Department of Commerce – **Donald Cravins** is the nominee for undersecretary for minority business development. **Cynthia Aragon** is the executive director of the International Trade Administration Advocacy Center. **Tricia Van Orden** is the director of the Trade Promotion Coordination Committee.

Department of Defense – **Milancy Harris** is the nominee for deputy undersecretary for security and intelligence. **Laura Taylor-Kale** is the nominee for assistant secretary for industrial base policy.

Department of Energy – **Dr. Asmeret Asefaw Berhe** is the director of the Office of Science.

Department of Homeland Security – **Admiral Linda Fagan** has become the first woman Commandant of the Coast Guard. **Iranga Kahangama** is the assistant secretary for cyber, infrastructure, risk and resilience.

Department of Labor – **Lauren Stewart** is chief of the Monitoring and Enforcement of Trade Agreements Division in the Bureau of International Labor Affairs.

Department of State – **Ambassador Marcia Bloom Bernicat** is now Director-General of the Foreign Service. **Mike Hammer** is now Special Envoy for the Horn of Africa. **Dorothy McAuliffe** is the Special Representative for Global Partnerships. **Josh Cohen** is now a senior advisor to Undersecretary Nuland. **Jane Hartley** was confirmed as Ambassador to the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland. **Bridget A. Brink** was confirmed as Ambassador to Ukraine. **Barbara A. Leaf** was confirmed as Assistant Secretary of State for Near Eastern Affairs. New ambassadorial nominations are **Yohannes Abraham** for ASEAN; **Mark Libby** for Azerbaijan; **Calvin Smyre** to the Bahamas; **David Pressman** for Hungary; **Angela Price Aggeler** to North Macedonia; **Joey Hood** for Tunisia.

Department of Transportation – **General Stephen Lyons** is the new Port and Supply Chain Envoy.

White House – **Karine Jean-Pierre** is now Press Secretary. **Betty Crenmins** is the director for sustainable supply chains on the Council of Environmental Quality (CEQ). **Dr. Jalonne White-Newsome**, who is senior director for environmental justice on the CEQ. **Dr. Aviva Aron-Dine** is deputy director and deputy assistant to the President on the National Economic Council. **Trey Lyons** is director for Eastern Europe on the National Security Council (NSC). **Stephanie Hallett** is senior director for the Middle East and North Africa on the NSC. **Dr. Tim Maurer** is the director for technology and democracy on the NSC.