

News From The States

EVENING WRAP

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By [Kate Queram](#)

Today I learned that the human skull is very close to the surface of the skin. (Technically I guess I already knew this, but I had never had to think about it before.) And that is why I have nothing else to say to you here!



The Big Takeaway

Federal lawmakers on Thursday approved yet another short-term funding measure to avert yet another government shutdown, kicking the extremely expensive can down the road for the fourth time in the current fiscal year. [The continuing resolution](#), approved with bipartisan support in both the House and the Senate, gives Congress until March 8 to finalize six of the 12 spending bills that fund key federal agencies, with the remaining six due by March 22, [our D.C. bureau reported](#). In other words, we'll be doing this again in a week.



"See you then."

(Photo by Ariana Figueroa/States Newsroom)

President Joe Biden was expected to sign the measure Friday, though he (like all of us) was less than thrilled with Congress. The agreement staves off a shutdown and buys more time, sure. And that's "good news for the American people," Biden said [in a statement](#).

"But I want to be clear: this is a short-term fix—not a long-term solution," he added. "In the days ahead, Congress must do its job and pass full-year funding bills that deliver for the American people."

This is, allegedly, already in the works. Congressional leaders [said Wednesday](#) they had reached a deal on spending levels for the first batch of federal agencies, including the departments of Agriculture, Commerce, Energy, Justice, Transportation, Veterans Affairs, as well as the Food and Drug Administration. Those bills will be approved before the March 8 deadline, lawmakers said, leaving at least two weeks to squabble over the rest.

It's the latest chapter in an endless and infuriating saga that began when [Republicans demanded](#) stringent border security measures in exchange for supporting a [supplemental aid package](#) and then [refused to accept them](#) once it became clear that Donald Trump [planned](#) to base his 2024 campaign/entire

personality on [blaming Biden](#) for the chaos at the U.S./Mexico border. It was a dumb and transparent deal that deprived the GOP of a generational win on a key issue solely to bolster Trump's complaining. Naturally, they blamed it [on Biden](#).



*Who's got Ray-Bans and a penchant for actual policy changes? This guy.
(Photo by Drew Angerer/Getty Images)*

After all that, House Republicans *still* had the gall to complain about border security Thursday. They don't *want* to fund the government without substantive changes to immigration policy (or, it would seem, *with* substantive changes to immigration policy). They don't *want* to spend billions of taxpayer dollars to keep federal agencies running if they could, instead, *not* to do that in hopes of wresting border security measures from Democrats (who already offered up border security measures). Because *that* — *stronger! Border! Security! Measures!* — is what Congress should spend money on, according to Rep. Andy Biggs, an Arizona Republican who [played a key role](#) in squelching the bipartisan bill that would have *spent money* on the same *border security measures* he now rants about while wandering the halls of the U.S. Capitol.

"We just keep spending money and we keep the policies that are in place," Biggs said, seemingly unaware that, yes, that's pretty much how government works when members of Congress refuse to change the policies!

The dysfunction is similarly rampant in the Michigan Republican Party, where [a leadership dispute](#) grew so toxic that it wound up in court. Kent County

Circuit Court Judge J. Joseph Rossi settled the matter Tuesday, [ruling](#) that Kristina Karamo had been properly removed as chair during a Jan. 6 meeting, clearing the way for former U.S. Rep. Pete Hoekstra to take control. Theoretically, that's the end of it. But in practice, well, it's a little more complicated, [the Michigan Advance reported](#).



*However, my work here is done. Good day. Gavel gavel.
(Photo by Getty Images)*

Because this was messy. The disagreement essentially cleaved the party in two, with one side backing Karamo and the other behind Hoekstra. The court decision doesn't change those loyalties, which had separated so thoroughly that each planned its own convention. Both are scheduled for Saturday — Karamo's in [Detroit](#), Hoekstra's in Grand Rapids. Only delegates selected in Grand Rapids will be credentialed by the Republican National Committee, which had [already recognized Hoekstra](#) as the state party chair. Most members understand that, but not all of them care. Some Republicans are [still planning](#) to support Karamo in Detroit, while a smaller faction is plotting a *third* convention in protest of what they described as “disenfranchised delegates” from the 1st Congressional District who were denied credentials in Grand Rapids.

The point is that it's still messy, both within the party and more broadly. Experts said the court decision could set a dangerous precedent for politics in general, allowing non-elected judges to meddle in the machinations of political groups. In some cases, that intervention could violate the parties' First

Amendment rights, according to Mark Brewer, an elections attorney and former chair of the Michigan Democratic Party.

“My concern is not partisan,” he said. “That any internal dispute over how the rules are interpreted and applied could end up in court with a judge second-guessing how that political party operates — I think that’s very dangerous for political parties as institutions.”



*DANGER. (JK, ballots are not dangerous! Unless you vote for idiots!)
(Photo/illustration by Jim Small/Arizona Mirror)*

Republicans constituted a threat all by themselves Thursday in Arizona, voting along party lines to pass [a House bill](#) that would eliminate no-excuse early mail ballots and restrict in-person voting to precincts, effectively upending the way the state administers elections, [per the Arizona Mirror](#). This is all, of course, in the name of “election security,” which is just another way of saying it’s based on voter-fraud conspiracy theories that have nothing at all to do with election security.

To wit: The “Free, Fair and Transparent Election Act” would reshape Arizona’s voting systems to better resemble those in Florida and Illinois, according to state Rep. Michael Carbone, the Republican who sponsored it. Mostly, that seemed to mean releasing election results more quickly, because everyone knows that lagging results are a clear sign of fraud — as opposed to, say, a [very normal situation in Arizona](#), or, perhaps, proof that election workers are taking their time to ensure every ballot is counted accurately.

The bill may pass the Senate but will never make it past Gov. Katie Hobbs, which is good news, mostly. Sure, it won't destroy Arizona's elections, but it's yet another seed of distrust in the election process. And eventually, at some point, that becomes the same thing.

Mutually assured destruction

- [A voter's guide to the Alabama 2nd Congressional District primaries](#)
- [The Idaho Republican Presidential Caucus is Saturday. Here's what to know.](#)
- [Partisan games or power to the people? Kentucky's GOP legislature clips governor's wings](#)
- [Bernie Moreno joins Donald Trump Jr. and Vivek Ramaswamy for South Ohio campaign stop](#)



Reproductive Rights

Anti-abortion groups, attorneys general from 25 states and more than 140 members of Congress have signed onto dozens of briefs urging the U.S. Supreme Court to please make it more difficult to obtain the medication abortion drug mifepristone, please and thank you, [our D.C. bureau reported](#).



Please and no thank you.
(Photo by Anna Moneymaker/Getty Images)

The “friend of the court” briefs (and boy, [are they ever friends](#)) come weeks ahead of oral argument in [a lawsuit](#) filed by anti-abortion groups seeking to tighten federal oversight of mifepristone, which became more widely available under regulatory changes enacted after 2016. Among other things, the updated policies allowed a broader array of health care providers to prescribe mifepristone, both in person and via telehealth, and allowed patients to receive it in the mail, without an in-person appointment.

The anti-abortion groups, led by the Alliance Defending Freedom, have argued that those changes infringe on the religious beliefs of doctors who may end up having to treat patients who suffer complications from the drug.

“It’s not hard to see why doctors who consider abortion objectionable are harmed when they must complete a chemical abortion — even if the child is no longer alive,” ADF wrote in the [84-page brief](#).

Of course, doctors with a conscientious objection to abortion do not *have* to treat those patients, according to federal law and also common sense. But that’s not good enough, according to ADF.

“FDA insists that nothing forces Respondent doctors to perform the procedures they deem objectionable,” ADF wrote. “But this ignores that FDA expressly relies on doctors like Respondents to treat emergent and life-threatening complications from abortion drugs ... and that Respondents facing these emergency situations must act immediately.”

MUST

- [Alabama Legislature passes bills aimed at protecting in vitro fertilization](#)
- [Judge strikes down a trio of Montana abortion laws as unconstitutional](#)
- [Bi-partisan legislation seeks to guarantee IVF protections in South Carolina](#)
- [Texas prosecutor disciplined for allowing murder charge against woman who self-managed an abortion](#)



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- [Critics of Kansas bills blocking transgender medical care to minors tossed from House hearing](#)
- [Man pleads guilty to charge he bribed U.S. Sen. Bob Menendez \(D-N.J.\)](#)



One Last Thing

Please enjoy [these fun facts](#) about the human skull. Not listed: Its extremely close relationship with the skin on your forehead. (Which is, to be fair, not a fun fact. Not a fun fact *at all.*)

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