

News From The States

EVENING WRAP

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By [Kate Queram](#)

To non-federal employees: Happy almost-weekend!

To federal employees: Happy almost-shutdown!

To all of us: [We did it, Joe](#). We made it to Friday.



The Big Takeaway

The U.S. House on Friday approved a \$1.2 trillion spending plan to fund the federal government through the remainder of the fiscal year, sending the bill to the Senate hours ahead of a midnight shutdown deadline, [our D.C. bureau reported](#). It was unclear as of Friday afternoon if senators would approve it in time to avoid a funding lapse, though the effects of the ensuing shutdown would likely not be felt until Monday, when most federal employees return to work.



*A very large building in which a very large number of lawmakers are consistently doing the very, very least.
(Photo by Holly McCall/Tennessee Lookout)*

The [proposal](#) survived only because of a hefty assist from Democrats, who joined Republicans in a [286-134 vote](#) amid the usual outrage from far-right lawmakers over the concept of bipartisanship, their basic duties as members of Congress, and the ongoing mess at the southern border. They were, at least, united in their opposition; in the end, more Republicans voted against the bill than voted for it.

“Once again, it’s going to be House Democrats that carry necessary legislation for the American people to the finish line,” Minority Leader Hakeem Jeffries (D-N.Y.) said before the vote.

As always, the GOP’s “concerns” are meaningless — particularly those related to immigration, which might be slightly less broken today if these very *same far-right lawmakers* had not [tanked](#) a bipartisan border security bill so Donald Trump could use the ongoing mess as a campaign talking point. They also got *plenty* of border-centric wins in the spending bill, which included funding for increased detention capacity, thousands of Border Patrol agents, and new

security technology, along with cuts to foreign aid, including reductions to assistance specifically for Palestine.



*BOOOO, WE GOT SOME STUFF WE WANTED
(Photo by Win McNamee/Getty Images)*

This wasn't enough for conservative lawmakers, because nothing is ever enough for conservative lawmakers, because that's what happens when you elect people who have literally no interest in governing. Enter Rep. Marjorie Taylor Greene (R-Ga.), a [Trump lackey](#) and self-appointed captain of the outrage squad, who [filed a motion Friday](#) to dismiss Speaker Mike Johnson (R-La.) for “betray[ing] our conference” and “break[ing] our rules.” It was, she admitted, mostly for show, at least for now.

“It’s more of a warning than a pink slip,” she told reporters. “We need a new speaker.”

Ousting their own speaker did [not go well](#) for Republicans when they tried it six months ago, and there’s little reason to believe it would go more smoothly this time. The caucus is still at war with itself, and its majority is [thinner now](#) than it was then, all but guaranteeing a lengthy and embarrassing floor fight. And that’s assuming anyone even wants the job, where you’re guaranteed to infuriate one

faction or another regardless of what you do. In summary, this is a very clearly bad idea, to the point that even Rep. Matt Gaetz (*Matt Gaetz!*) is cautioning against it.

“If we vacated this speaker, we’d end up with a Democrat,” Gaetz predicted Thursday evening. “When I vacated the last one, I made a promise to the country that we would not end up with a Democrat speaker. I couldn’t make that promise again today.”



*House Minority Leader Hakeem Jeffries, unbothered.
(Photo by Chip Somodevilla/Getty Images)*

The rest of us continue to grapple with the side effects of a dysfunctional and extremist Congress, including a heightened risk of political violence that has prompted states to restrict guns in places where people vote or hand in ballots. The most recent is New Mexico, where Democrats (and only Democrats) approved a measure banning firearms within 100 feet of polling places and 50 feet of ballot drop boxes, subject to misdemeanor charges or up to six months in jail. At least 21 states have similar policies, nine of them enacted in the past two years, [Stateline reported](#).

“Our national climate is increasingly polarized,” said New Mexico state Rep. Reena Szczepanski, a Democrat and one of the bill’s sponsors. “Anything we

can do to turn the temperature down and allow for the safe operation of our very basic democratic right, voting, is critical.”

Szczepanski and her colleagues penned the proposal after speaking with poll workers from Santa Fe, who faced harassment in 2020 from voters openly carrying firearms. The policy stops short of a blanket ban, with exceptions for people with concealed carry permits and members of law enforcement. But it was still a nonstarter for Republicans, who worried about gun owners facing criminal charges for accidentally bringing their firearm to the polls. (Who among us, etc.)

“We have a lot of real crime problems in this state,” House Minority Floor Leader Ryan Lane said last month during a legislative hearing. “It’s puzzling to me why we’re making this a priority.”



*Personally I think it's more puzzling to “accidentally” bring a gun to vote. Or, you know, anywhere?
(Photo by Matt Rourke/The Associated Press)*

Well, someone has to. Our politics have grown increasingly toxic over the past several years, thanks to a hateful mix of inflammatory rhetoric, increased threats (particularly around elections), and a never-ending tsunami of disinformation. On a parallel track, we’ve got looser gun laws, record firearm sales and *literal*

vigilantism at polling places and ballot tabulation centers. This is why election workers are leaving the field [in droves](#), and why the ones who are still hanging in there are concerned for their safety. Throw in Trump's remarks on [any given day](#), and there's your answer, New Mexico House Minority Floor Leader Ryan Lane.

"Our democracy has come under new and unnerving pressure based on the emergence of the election denial movement, disinformation and false narratives about the integrity of our elections," said Robyn Sanders, a Democracy Program counsel for the Brennan Center for Justice, a left-leaning voting rights group based at the New York University School of Law. "The presence of guns in these places presents a risk of violence."

But he probably already knew all that

- [Second gentleman Doug Emhoff joins labor leaders in Denver for roundtable discussion](#)
- [National Republican party dynamics at play in Montana county commission primary](#)
- [Voter registration, mail-in voting: Pennsylvania deadlines to know ahead of the April 23 primary](#)
- [U.S. Rep. Kay Granger \(R-Texas\) to step down from powerful House appropriations leadership position](#)



Also Trending

The Tennessee Senate on Thursday gave final approval to a bill that would bar the state from rejecting prospective foster and adoptive parents based solely on their "sincerely held religious or moral" objections to the existence of non-cisgender humans. [The legislation](#), which must clear the House before heading to Gov. Bill Lee, would also bar the Department of Children's Services from requiring those parents to accept or affirm a child's gender identity or sexual orientation, [the Tennessee Lookout reported](#).



A sincerely held belief.
(Photo by John Partipilo/Tennessee Lookout)

Fear not, though – the policy “does not preclude” the state from considering “the religious or moral beliefs” of an adoptive or foster child or their family of origin. In other words, the department *can* consider the specific needs of each child — but it doesn't *have* to. That's a stark departure from the state's [current policy](#), which explicitly protects against harassment and discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity, and from [federal guidelines](#), which direct homes to “establish an environment free of hostility, mistreatment, or abuse based on the child's LGBTQI+ status.” It's also anathema to the [whole premise of foster care](#), in which the state does its best to act in the “best interests” of children, a disproportionate number of whom [likely identify as LGBTQ+](#).

But all of that is secondary to the point of the bill: Expanding the state's dwindling pool of foster families, which I guess has been limited by the pesky perception that you shouldn't open your home to an LGBTQ+ child if you “sincerely” believe LGBTQ+ children are, by virtue of their existence, wrong or immoral. Once prospective parents understand that it's actually just fine to care

for a child whose identity they “sincerely” abhor, they’ll be rushing to sign up, according to state Rep. Mary Littleton, a Republican and the bill’s sponsor.

Littleton would also like kids in foster care to be matched with the “most suitable” caretakers, she said. But it’s not like that precludes anti-LGBTQ+ bigots from taking in LGBTQ+ kids. It’s not like that dynamic is inherently “contrary” to the child’s “best interest.” It says so *right in the bill!*

Critics panned the proposal as “wrong” and a “violation of federal law.” It’s a blatant rejection of the “central organizing principle of all decisions made in the child welfare system,” said Cathryn Oakley, senior director of legal policy for the Human Rights Campaign.

More succinctly: It’s “cruel,” said state Sen. Raumesh Akbari, a Memphis Democrat.

“I just think that you shouldn’t be able to deny somebody’s basic existence because you say it affronts your religious or moral beliefs,” she said. “That is between you and your god. It should not be something that potentially makes a child feel unwelcome and challenges who they are to their very core.”

“Sincerely”

- [Former Alabama library director demands reinstatement](#)
- [Idaho librarians from across state testify in opposition to revived library materials bill](#)
- [New Hampshire House passes bill barring trans girls from middle school, high school girls’ sports teams](#)
- [Wyoming bans most gender-affirming medical care for children](#)



From The Newsrooms

Criminal Justice

- [Alabama Supreme Court approves execution of Jamie Ray Mills](#)
- [Kentucky’s new juvenile justice chief is veteran of managing adult](#)
- [‘The hate that lives next door to us’: Senate OKs expansion to Michigan hate crime laws](#)
- [As South Carolina jails and prisons](#)

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[weed out cellphones, officials say
bill specifying penalties could help](#)

Health Care

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- [Republican bill making childhood vaccines more accessible headed to Kentucky governor's desk](#)
- [Minnesota conservative groups liken surrogacy to slavery](#)
- [Texas Medical Board proposes new guidance for abortion medical exceptions](#)

Civil Rights

- [Alaska Gov. Mike Dunleavy's protest crackdown proposal faces public pushback and lawmaker scrutiny](#)
- [Has the Florida Legislature lost its taste for stretching the Constitution?](#)
- [Texas Republican border maneuvers cause chaos, outrage local officials](#)
- [Virginia Gov. Glenn Youngkin considers budget proposal to redirect diversity office funds](#)



One Last Thing

Jump back! Kevin Bacon will celebrate the 40th anniversary of “Footloose” by [attending prom](#) at the high school where the movie was filmed. Let’s hear it for the boy!*

*There is no such thing as too many “Footloose” references in one tiny paragraph
OK



EVERYBODY CUT FOOTLOOSE
(via [Giphy](#))

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