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Washington Weekly: Trump on a roll with cabinet nominations

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People in Washington are finding it hard to keep up with the pace of President Trump's daily executive actions, announcements, and his transparency with the media. His regular question-and-answer sessions with the media tease out new Trump positions on a wide range of issues almost every day, and his cabinet officials must scramble to adjust to them. The Governmental Affairs US team takes a look at this, and much more in their latest Washington Weekly.

This week, the Senate confirmed three more of President Trump's cabinet-level nominees. The President so far has a perfect record on nominees that have received a Senate vote (16 and counting). This includes nominees like Robert F. Kennedy Jr. (approved as Secretary of Health and Human Services yesterday), who had faced serious concerns from some Senate Republicans. The record underscores Trump's influence with Republican Senators and is a feather in the cap for new Senate Majority Leader John Thune (R-SD). It is likely that Trump at some point will have future nominees for lower offices fail, but they are a secondary priority to those being confirmed now. *Remarkably, the only Trump nominee to falter was the controversial Matt Gaetz, who was the first pick for Attorney General and never a serious prospect to be confirmed in the Senate (and withdrew from consideration).*

More Focus on Tariffs. No surprises here. President Trump announced a 25% tariff on all imported steel and aluminum effective 3 March. Most steel and aluminum imports to the US come from Canada, Mexico, and Brazil. Negotiations are underway to revise those plans with the affected countries. The President also called for a study to equalize tariffs with trading partners. Notice that both activities cite future dates for possible implementation, which provides time for negotiations that may delay or revise the proposed tariff increases. However, we think most of the tariff increases on steel and aluminum will proceed in March. *The President views these tariffs differently than others imposed over the last few*

weeks since he invoked similar tariffs on these products in his first term and wants to be politically responsive to US steel workers who would benefit from the higher tariffs.

Trump Agenda Moving Slowly in Congress. The House and Senate budget committees each passed separate budget resolutions this week. The budget resolutions set the parameters around subsequent "reconciliation" bills that will likely soon advance. The two chambers right now are taking two different approaches. The House budget resolution looks to set up one big reconciliation bill that is very broad in scope and would include funding for Trump priorities (immigration, energy, and defense), an extension of the 2017 tax law, large-scale spending cuts and an increase to the debt limit. The Senate budget resolution just focuses on the spending for immigration, energy, and defense. Senate Republicans want to prioritize that funding, which is needed to expand law enforcement along the borders and to increase deportations of those in the US without documentation. Without the funding, President Trump will have a limited impact on illegal immigration. *While each chamber will look to pass their different resolutions later this month, they will need to coordinate a path ahead in order to give Trump policy wins in the months ahead.*

Government Shutdown Coming? On 14 March, government funding will expire unless Congress acts to extend it. We are starting to see warning signs that this deadline might not be met. This would trigger a government shutdown. As a reminder, the funding bill needs to be bipartisan since it will require 60 votes in the Senate to pass (it also will need Democratic votes in the House since not all Republicans will vote for the funding bill). Democratic lawmakers are frustrated with the Trump administration's action to try to freeze certain government spending and efforts to pare back the federal workforce and bureaucracy through the efforts of Elon Musk. This likely will lead to demands from Democrats that Musk cease his work and that all federal funding approved by Congress be spent by the new administration. These demands will be difficult for Trump to accept. *The sprint over the next four weeks to reach a deal for funding government operations is heating up, and the current trajectory is starting to point to a shutdown.*

For much more on the topics under the dome, [see the latest Washington Weekly](#).

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