

TRUMP'S THIRD QUARTER: A FACT SHEET

with research from Fiona Hinrichsen, Jessica Flemming, Uma Zierden-Singleton, and Maddy DuBois

Now 9 months into the Trump administration, our democracy is under siege. Laws and democratic norms have been violated, political violence is on the rise, and we've backslid in a number of key areas ranging from immigrant rights, to healthcare, to environmental regulation. For each of the first two quarter's of Trump's presidency, we released a report distilling some key issues with the aim of fighting information overwhelm (see the [Q1](#) and [Q2](#) reports). This third quarter report continues that earlier work, providing critical updates from the recent months of Trump's presidency.

POLITICAL VIOLENCE

The third quarter of Trump's presidency has seen an uptick in political violence. On June 14, 2025, Democratic Minnesota state representative [Melissa Hortman](#) and her husband Mark were shot in their home. Months later, on September 10, 2025, right-wing political activist [Charlie Kirk](#) was shot during his visit to Utah Valley University as part of his nationwide campus tour. Between June and September, there were multiple shootings, including [the attack on an ICE facility in Dallas on September 24](#), and [a school shooting in Evergreen, Colorado](#) the same day Kirk was killed. Taken together, these incidents highlight how partisan divides, deep dissatisfaction with our democracy, and an inflammatory cultural landscape increasingly spill into bloodshed. Amid this wave of violence, attention has turned to the role of Trump's rhetoric. His speeches have long been controversial, but over the past year concerns about their threat to safety have grown. [Critics, including security experts](#), argue that his language at rallies and online has helped incite violence among supporters. One example came during the Kirk's Memorial, where he stated, "[I hate my opponent, and I don't want the best for them](#)," a tragically ironic remark given the context. Beyond rhetoric, Trump has also turned to force: [authorizing the deployment of National Guard troops to Portland, Chicago, Memphis, and other Democratic-led cities](#) under the justification of quelling crime and protecting ICE facilities (See page 3 for more details). State and local officials denounced these deployments as unlawful and unnecessary, warning that using armed troops against civilians represents a dangerous escalation of political violence itself.

GOVERNMENT SHUTDOWN

As of October 1st, the government shutdown following a standoff between Democrats and Republicans over [healthcare funding](#) and the Trump Administration's proposed Medicaid cuts. The Trump Administration and Republicans have [spread the narrative that Democrats are shutting down the government](#) because they are demanding free healthcare for "illegal aliens" and reinstating emergency healthcare for migrants without US citizenship. However, in actuality, Democrats are trying to [come to a compromise](#) to reverse the severe cut in funding for Medicaid following Trump's domestic tax cut bill and to extend subsidies for the Affordable Care Act (ACA) which is set to expire at the end of the year, possibly leaving millions of people uninsured.

GOVERNMENT SHUTDOWN CONTINUED

According to the Congressional Budget Office, nearly 750,000 federal employees risk being furloughed as long as the shutdown continues. Essential services such as Social Security, Medicare, and TSA operations continue, but many agencies, including the CDC and NIH, have suspended operations. Programs like the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC), which serves over 6 million low-income families, are at risk of shutting down due to funding shortages.

JOB REPORT STATISTICS AND PRESSURE ON THE FEDERAL RESERVE:

The U.S. economy has demonstrated troubling signs of stagnation amid a less-than-optimal job report in August. Unemployment climbed to 4.3 percent, the highest level since 2021, while only 22,000 new jobs were added, far short of the 75,000 predicted by economists. However, the BLS was not granted its full budget by Congress, so almost 20 percent of the price inflation data was not collected for the month of July. The troubling job report also led the Trump Administration to fire Dr. Erika McEntarfer, Commissioner of the Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) over concerns that she rigged the numbers to make Republicans and Trump look bad--a baseless claim. The BLS is a non-partisan agency, which risks becoming politicized from continued pressure by an image-concerned Trump administration. A loss of trust in economic statistics imperils the whole economy and runs the risk of policymakers having to make uninformed decisions in absence of independently verified data. Independent agencies are the bedrock of a healthy democracy.

At the same time, President Trump has intensified pressure on Federal Reserve Chair Jerome Powell, publicly attacking him as "incompetent" and demanding interest rate cuts to 4.0-4.25 percent, which the Federal Reserve passed in September. This points to a widespread effort from the Trump administration to exert power over the central bank, especially considering Trump's attempt to fire Federal Reserve Governor Lisa Cook via a social media post in August. Cook's position has been upheld in a federal appeals court. However, the White House stated that it plans to take the case to the Supreme Court, raising questions of executive overreach in the non-partisan central bank. The Federal Reserve's independence is essential to the institution's integrity, enabling it to make decisions based on economic considerations, not politics, for a stronger economy and greater financial stability.

TARIFFS

In September, the Trump administration issued a new executive order that updated reciprocal tariffs, replacing the previous 10% universal duties with higher rates. On September 8, further adjustments were made to specific goods, with some exceptions for critical minerals and pharmaceuticals, while tariffs on aluminum, resin, and silicone products were increased. Overall, there has been a clear trend toward stronger customs enforcement and higher tariffs. The new tariffs vary by country: 50% on Indian and Brazilian goods, 30% on South African imports, 20% on Vietnamese products, and 15% on Japanese and South Korean goods. India, in particular, faces an additional 25% penalty for continuing to purchase Russian oil, effectively sanctioning trade between the two countries. Meanwhile, the U.S. has engaged in negotiations with China, resulting in reciprocal tariffs capped at 30% on Chinese imports and 10% on U.S. exports until November 10, 2025.

Additional measures include a tariff increase on Canada from 25% to 35% announced on August 1st under the International Emergency Economic Powers Act (IEEPA), supposedly aimed at addressing a public health crisis caused by fentanyl and illicit drugs crossing the border. Trade negotiations with Canada are ongoing. Similarly, the U.S. imposed a 25% "fentanyl tariff" on Mexico, along with other tariffs across various industries. The Trump administration is also renegotiating the United States-Mexico-Canada Agreement (USMCA), amid debates on whether to continue or exit the deal. Both Canada and Mexico are being pressured to adopt stricter trade policies toward China.

TARIFFS CONTINUED

A recent Federal Court ruling stated that IEEPA does not justify tariffs against Canada and Mexico. The Supreme Court has yet to decide whether the tariffs exceed presidential authority. Trump's previously widespread "de minimis" trade exemption, allowing small parcels under \$800 to be imported duty-free, was suspended due to safety concerns, impacting consumer imports and shipping companies like FedEx.

Amidst these moves, Canada and Mexico are deepening their trade relationship in response to U.S. economic pressure. Meanwhile, tariffs are beginning to affect consumers directly, as major brands such as Adidas, Walmart, and Hasbro have started raising prices to absorb the increased costs. Overall, these trade policy changes are reshaping the global supply chain, consumer landscape, and global political dynamics as countries adjust.

TRUMP UN GENERAL ASSEMBLY SPEECH & FOREIGN RELATIONS

On September 23, President Trump addressed the UN General Assembly in an unwieldy speech, criticizing the organization for recent inaction, such as failing to punish Russia for NATO airspace violations and holding Israel accountable. The Trump administration has sharply cut essential U.S. funding to the UN and USAID, accusing the agencies of promoting anti-American ideals (see Q1/2 fact sheets for more). Trump also criticized European green energy policies and dismissed climate change as a myth. More significantly, Trump criticized representatives over their countries' immigration policies, telling them that their "countries are going to hell."

Amid escalating tensions with Brazil, following a 50% tariff on Brazilian goods in retaliation for the persecution of former President Jair Bolsonaro, President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva and Trump have agreed to meet after an encounter at the UN assembly. Hopefully, this may signal efforts to ease tensions, reduce tariffs, and control rising consumer prices.

Russia-Ukraine:

Over the past couple of months, Trump has shifted his stance on the war in Ukraine, asserting Ukraine can regain all its territory and urging European powers to pressure Russia to negotiate and end the war. On August 15th, he met with Russian president Vladimir Putin but even after rolling out the red carpet, no peace deal was reached and the meeting was largely viewed as a victory for Putin. In his UN speech, Trump criticized European countries for buying Russian energy and called for NATO countries to shoot down Russian aircraft entering NATO airspace. The U.S. plans to continue supplying weapons to NATO and is now considering delivering U.S. missiles to Ukraine.

Palestine and Israel:

Leading up to the General Assembly, many countries, including the UK, France, Canada, and Australia, recognized a Palestinian state, increasing international pressure. Trump, in opposition, denied visas to Palestinian authorities to attend the assembly, citing terrorist ties. During the assembly, he proposed a post-war Gaza meeting with Arab and Middle Eastern leaders. Destruction in Gaza is ongoing and has caused a severe humanitarian crisis, now designated as a famine. On September 29, Trump met with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu to discuss a peace plan amid intensified devastation in Gaza. Netanyahu was largely supportive of the Trump plan which included a hostage exchange, Israeli withdrawal from Gaza, and Hamas disarmament. As of today (October 9th), Hamas and Israel have agreed to the first phase of a ceasefire along the lines of Trump's September plan. Today's deal involves an exchange of Israeli hostages and Palestinian prisoners and a partial withdrawal of Israeli military from Gaza. Many details have yet to be finalized including the timeline for military withdrawal, Hamas disarmament and, crucially, governance over Gaza. Nevertheless, the deal represents a major opportunity for peace amidst brutal loss of life in Palestine and devastating conflict across the region.

IMMIGRATION CRACKDOWN AND ICE RAIDS

The Trump Administration has continued the mass deportation and detainment of immigrants throughout the United States--most of whom have committed no criminal offenses--with almost 60,000 people currently being held in ICE detention centers. This follows notable Q1 and Q2 actions such as the June Supreme Court ruling allowing the administration to uphold a birthright citizenship ban, and the deployment of the National Guard in response to protests against immigration policy in Los Angeles.

Expansion of ICE:

The passage of Trump's domestic policy bill in July allocated over \$70 billion to support ICE's mass deportations and detainment of individuals. This may lead to an even greater increase in arrests, as ICE has begun pushing to hire more than 14,000 new employees by the end of the year. ICE's rapid hiring push raises concerns that new immigration officers may not be properly vetted, as well as fear over the brutality of these detainments and the disregard of the Constitutional rights of these largely innocent individuals. Troublingly, a Supreme Court ruling from early September affirmed the ability of ICE agents to stop and question individuals in public regardless of race or ethnicity—essentially racial profiling. The Trump Administration has also limited bonds for individuals facing deportation, despite legal contests from organizations such as the ACLU, forcing many more to “face indefinite detention in horrible conditions.”

Raid at the Hyundai Plant in Georgia:

On September 24, immigration officials raided a Hyundai electric vehicle battery plant in Ellabell, GA, arresting 475 people. Many arrested were South Korean citizens, which may put stress on the diplomatic relationship between the United States and South Korea. Dubbed by DHS officials as “the largest single-site enforcement operation in the history of homeland security investigations,” the raid raises concerns as to whether employees in manufacturing sites such as the Hyundai plant will feel safe in their place of work.

HEALTHCARE

As of October 2025, HHS Secretary RFK Jr. has cut \$500 million in funding for mRNA vaccines, which were essential to ending the COVID-19 pandemic and are considered a critical tool for responding to future public health emergencies. Public health experts warn that this decision leaves the United States less prepared for the next pandemic and fuels lingering suspicion of these vaccines, which were already the subject of widespread controversy and conspiracy theories during COVID-19. Vaccine skepticism has real consequences, and many officials fear RFK Jr.'s advisory committee is dominated by conspiracy theorists rather than medical experts.

Since mid-2025, his handpicked CDC panel has reviewed federal vaccine standards, debating policies on COVID-19, Hepatitis B, and MMR vaccines, including whether prescriptions should be required and at what ages they should be administered. The panel postponed a vote on shifting the Hepatitis B vaccine from birth to the first month of life and approved separating MMR and chickenpox vaccines for children up to age three, replacing the combined four-in-one dose. The CDC is still maintaining full access to COVID-19 shots for those over 65 but now requires provider approval for others, while states have issued conflicting recommendations, creating confusion and leaving many people vulnerable.

These policy shifts have been accompanied by growing political turmoil: on September 4, RFK Jr. testified before the Senate Finance Committee amid bipartisan concern over his approach, including the firing of Susan Monarez for refusing to pre-approve vaccine recommendations and fire career scientists. Even with multiple employees resigning in protest, RFK Jr. remained defiant, prompting members of Congress to call for his resignation over fears that his leadership could undermine public health.

ENVIRONMENT

The Trump administration has adamantly denied the reality of climate change and pulled back initiatives to combat climate change. In his second term alone, Trump has rolled back or eliminated more than 100 climate-related initiatives. For example, in April, he canceled funding for the consortium responsible for America's National Climate Assessment and cut support for climate research at NOAA's Office of Oceanic and Atmospheric Research (OAR), which has been studying climate issues for over fifty years. At the same time, the Trump Administration has increased the use of fossil fuels, opening protected land in Alaska to oil and gas drilling. Most recently, on September 23, 2025, at the United Nations General Assembly, Trump called climate change "the greatest con job ever" and warned that "If you don't get away from this green scam, your country is going to fail."

FREE SPEECH

Jimmy Kimmel:

The third quarter of Trump's Presidency has seen an escalation of infringements on free speech. In mid-September, Jimmy Kimmel! was indefinitely suspended after Kimmel criticized MAGA supporters for their reaction to the shooting of Charlie Kirk, saying they were "desperately trying to characterize this kid... as anything other than one of them." FCC Chairman Brendan Carr threatened action against ABC and Disney unless Kimmel was punished, sparking widespread concern over censorship and another Trump attack on the free press.

Earlier this year, Donald Trump filed multiple lawsuits against other media companies like *The New York Times* and attempted to ban *The Associated Press* from White House press briefings. Despite Trump's attempts to silence free speech, Jimmy Kimmel returned to TV within a matter of days. Many suspect that this had to do with the massive backlash Disney received for cancelling the show in the first place.

The attack on free speech extends into student activism. As covered in our Q1 and Q2 fact sheets, the detainment and deportation of Mahmoud Khalil and other pro-Palestine protestors was highly concerning and a clear breach of 1st amendment rights.

Epstein Files:

The Epstein Files have long drawn attention from Trump supporters, who anticipated that his second term would bring new disclosures. Jeffrey Epstein, a convicted sex offender who exploited underage girls with partner Ghislaine Maxwell, died in prison during Trump's first term. Although Trump and Epstein were known associates with Trump's name appearing in the Epstein files, no evidence has confirmed Trump's involvement in any offenses, and the Supreme Court has upheld Maxwell's sentence despite speculation about a pardon by Trump.

In July 2025, *The Wall Street Journal* published a report on Trump's past connection to Epstein, including a lewd letter attributed to Trump in Epstein's 2003 birthday book. Trump denied the letter's authenticity and filed a \$10 billion libel suit against *the Journal* and Rupert Murdoch. In September, Epstein's estate produced the book, confirming the letter's existence, though the White House continues to deny its authenticity, a broader reflection of the efforts by the Trump administration to silence speech it considers unflattering. This raises concerns about threats to free speech in America and is a glaring warning sign for what may be to come.