

THE FILIBUSTER

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Two courts, two rulings, and a Show-Me State that has stopped showing anyone anything clear. Here's what actually mattered in US politics this week, and why your exam board cares.

THE BIG STORY

SHOW ME THE MAP

8 SEPTEMBER 2026

Missouri's Supreme Court and a federal district judge issued flatly contradictory rulings within minutes of each other this week, over which congressional map the state can use in November's midterms. The clash leaves election officials with no single map that satisfies both courts at once.

“This victory halts a full-on constitutional crisis.”

The dispute centres on a 2025 Republican-drawn map designed to unseat Democratic Congressman Emanuel Cleaver, challenged by the campaign group People Not Politicians. The US Supreme Court refused to let the new map stand, but a federal judge then blocked the state from using any other map either, a contradiction one of the challengers' lawyers called simply unworkable.

WHY IT MATTERS This is federalism and the separation of powers colliding in real time: a state court, a federal court and the US Supreme Court have each asserted authority over the same congressional map, with November's elections, and control of a swing House seat, hanging on which ruling actually holds.

SPECIFICATION LINKS Edexcel 9PL0 3A.1 (US Constitution and Federalism), 3A.4 (US Supreme Court and Civil Rights), 3A.5 (US Democracy and Participation); AQA 7152 3.2.1.1 (The constitutional framework of US government), 3.2.1.4 (The judicial branch of government), 3.2.1.5 (The electoral process and direct democracy).

ELECTIONS, PARTIES & VOTING RIGHTS



Pretend I'm Running

9-10 SEPTEMBER 2026

The Republican Party held the first midterm-year national convention in its history this week, a two-day rally and fundraiser at Dallas's American Airlines Center that the RNC billed as a showcase for Trump's record ahead of November's elections.

“Please Pretend That I'm Running”

Trump urged the crowd to treat the midterms as a personal referendum on him, promising a \$5,000 “Trump dividend” payment to every American adult if Republicans keep control of Congress. Vice President JD Vance was blunter about the risk, telling supporters “we might not win” despite the show of party unity.

WHY IT MATTERS Conventions have traditionally been reserved for choosing a presidential nominee, so staging one purely to rally support in a midterm year shows how far a president can turn his party's own machinery toward his personal standing, even when his name is nowhere on the ballot.

***SPECIFICATION LINKS** Edexcel 9PL0 3A.5 (US Democracy and Participation), 3A.3 (US Presidency); AQA 7152 3.2.1.6 (Political parties), 3.2.1.3 (The executive branch of government: President).*



The Midterm Countdown Begins

8 SEPTEMBER 2026

Labor Day weekend marked the unofficial start of the 2026 midterm campaign, with control of both chambers of Congress up for grabs. Republicans hold narrow majorities in the House and Senate, but Democrats are now favoured to retake the House.

The Senate map has become newly competitive too, with costly races underway in traditionally Republican-leaning states including Iowa, Texas, Ohio and Alaska. Trump's approval ratings have sunk to record lows, with voters citing a disconnect between the White House's priorities and their own top concerns.

WHY IT MATTERS The midterms will decide whether Trump spends his final two years in office facing a Congress willing to block his agenda, or one that continues to fall in line, making this the single biggest test of his presidency's second half.

***SPECIFICATION LINKS** Edexcel 9PL0 3A.5 (US Democracy and Participation); AQA 7152 3.2.1.5 (The electoral process and direct democracy), 3.2.1.6 (Political parties).*



Iowa's Dead Heat Could Decide The Senate

11 SEPTEMBER 2026

Republican Ashley Hinson and Democrat Josh Turek are locked in a near-tied contest for Iowa's open Senate seat, vacated by the retiring Joni Ernst. The latest polling average gives Turek a wafer-thin lead of 45.6% to Hinson's 45.1%, a genuine dead heat.

Iowa backed Trump by eleven to fourteen points in 2024, but Turek, a state representative and Paralympic gold medallist, has kept the race competitive despite Hinson holding a large fundraising advantage of over ten million dollars to his six million.

WHY IT MATTERS A single Senate seat in a state Trump won comfortably shows how national the swing against the president has become, and how a strong personal story can keep a Democrat competitive even where the underlying fundamentals favour Republicans.

SPECIFICATION LINKS Edexcel 9PL0 3A.5 (US Democracy and Participation); AQA 7152 3.2.1.5 (The electoral process and direct democracy), 3.2.1.6 (Political parties).

PRESIDENTIAL POWER & THE CONSTITUTION



Victory Or Nothing

11 SEPTEMBER 2026

At a Pentagon ceremony marking the twenty fifth anniversary of the 11 September 2001 attacks, Trump linked the continuing conflict with Iran to the wider fight against terrorism, telling the crowd the United States would settle for nothing less than complete victory.

“There Can Only Be Victory”

Some members of Congress continue to challenge the president's authority to sustain the campaign without a formal declaration of war. In July, Michigan Republican Tom Barrett was one of only four Republicans who joined Democrats to pass a resolution limiting military action in Iran, 214 votes to 208, arguing that “only Congress has the authority to authorise military action in Iran.”

WHY IT MATTERS This is a live test of the War Powers Resolution of 1973 (a law requiring presidents to withdraw forces from unauthorised hostilities after 60 days), and of how far informal presidential power can stretch before Congress reasserts its constitutional authority to declare war.

SPECIFICATION LINKS Edexcel 9PL0 3A.3 (US Presidency), 3A.2 (US Congress); AQA 7152 3.2.1.3 (The executive branch of government: President), 3.2.1.2 (The legislative branch of government: Congress).

TRADE & THE GLOBAL ECONOMY



No More Bombardier!

8 SEPTEMBER 2026

Canada's retaliatory tariffs on \$27.6 billion of US goods took effect this week, hitting steel, aluminium, furniture and clothing with duties of up to 50%, after trade talks between Washington and Ottawa collapsed in late August.

“No More Selling Bombardier In The United States!”

Canadian Prime Minister Mark Carney called the American tariffs that prompted the retaliation “unfair, uneconomic”, warning they called into question the reliability of any future deal, while Ottawa unveiled a \$7.5 billion support package for affected businesses and workers.

WHY IT MATTERS Congress holds the constitutional power to regulate foreign commerce, but decades of delegated emergency authority let the president impose and escalate tariffs largely without a congressional vote, a good example of informal presidential power growing at Congress's own expense.

***SPECIFICATION LINKS** Edexcel 9PL0 3A.3 (US Presidency), 3A.2 (US Congress); AQA 7152 3.2.1.3 (The executive branch of government: President), 3.2.1.2 (The legislative branch of government: Congress).*



Trump And Xi Set Date For Trade Showdown

10 SEPTEMBER 2026

Trump and Chinese President Xi Jinping are due to meet in Washington on 24 September, their third face-to-face meeting this year, as both countries edge towards reciprocal cuts to tariffs on \$30 billion of goods.

The current tariff truce between the two countries expires on 10 November. The \$30 billion figure represents roughly 28% of all US exports to China, and the stakes are high on both sides after Chinese exports to the US fell sharply once elevated tariffs took hold.

WHY IT MATTERS Even as he escalates against Canada, Trump is using tariffs as a bargaining chip with China, showing how the same emergency trade powers can be turned toward confrontation or negotiation depending entirely on presidential judgement, with only limited scope for Congress to intervene.

***SPECIFICATION LINKS** Edexcel 9PL0 3A.3 (US Presidency); AQA 7152 3.2.1.3 (The executive branch of government: President).*

IN OTHER NEWS

Shorter stories worth a look, in case your revision has room for them.

Delaware's courts side with voting rights: three separate rulings this week upheld the state's voting and campaign finance protections, rejecting challenges to donor disclosure rules, permanent absentee voting and new postal requirements for vote-by-mail.

The Supreme Court's new term takes shape: justices open their October sitting with seven major cases on the list, including a climate change lawsuit against oil and gas companies and a case testing whether prolonged immigration detention requires a bond hearing.

Congress buys itself breathing room: a stopgap funding bill now keeps federal agencies open at current levels until 11 December, pushing the next shutdown fight safely past the midterms.



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