

THE FILIBUSTER

A histpology.co.uk briefing for A-level Politics

ISSUE 6 • 20 SEPTEMBER – 26 SEPTEMBER 2026

IN THIS ISSUE

- Saved, for Now
- Trump and Xi Meet, but Strike No Big Deal
- ICE Quietly Deletes Detainees From Its Own Locator
- White House Bumps CNN From Air Force One, Again
- Trump Administration Asks Court to Re-Detain Georgetown Scholar
- Missouri's Redrawn Map Heads Back to the Supreme Court (for the Third Time)

A shadow-docket ruling on voter rolls, a scholar the government wants back behind bars, and a redistricting fight that refuses to end. Here is what actually mattered in US politics this week, and why your exam board cares.

THE BIG STORY

Saved, for Now

25 SEPTEMBER 2026

The Supreme Court cleared the way, on 25 September, for the Trump administration to use an expanded federal database to check state voter rolls for non-citizens. In an unsigned order on its emergency “shadow docket” (a fast-track process for urgent cases, decided without full briefing or oral argument), the justices paused a lower court injunction that had blocked the scheme, letting officials resume bulk citizenship checks while the underlying case continues on appeal.

“We Had to File an Emergency Petition in the Supreme Court”

The database, called SAVE (Systematic Alien Verification for Entitlements), was originally built to check immigrants' eligibility for public benefits. The Trump administration expanded it in 2025 so election officials could cross-check voter rolls against federal citizenship records using Social Security numbers. Its practical effect on November's elections should be limited: federal law bars systematic voter-roll purges within 90 days of a vote, though officials may still check individual voters, and bulk checking can resume once polls close. Justice Ketanji Brown Jackson dissented, joined by Justices Sonia Sotomayor and Elena Kagan, arguing that even wrongly flagging a small number of lawful voters causes more harm than letting a disputed federal action wait for a full hearing.

WHY IT MATTERS This is a textbook example of the Supreme Court's shadow docket in action: a major policy shift, decided in an unsigned order with no full opinion, taking effect before the underlying legal question is settled. It also illustrates the recurring tension between federal executive power over immigration data and state control of elections, and shows how the Court can let a contested policy operate now while judging its legality later.

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

THE PRESIDENCY & CIVIL RIGHTS



Trump and Xi Meet, but Strike No Big Deal

23-25 SEPTEMBER 2026

Presidents Trump and Xi Jinping held a three-day state visit in Washington from 23 to 25 September. The two sides extended their existing tariff truce by two months, through January 2027, and announced a new US-China “Board of Trade” intended to shield selected goods from future disputes. Beyond that, the summit produced no formal, signed agreement: officials on both sides described a wider trade deal as still under discussion rather than settled.

“China and the United States Must Act as Responsible Major Countries”

The two leaders also opened a new channel for talks on artificial intelligence, which the US ambassador compared to Cold War-era crisis communications, and Trump said he had told Xi that Chinese support for Iran was unacceptable. On Taiwan, Washington repeated its long-standing position of no change to the Taiwan Relations Act or the One China policy.

WHY IT MATTERS Summit diplomacy like this sits almost entirely within the president's own constitutional foreign policy powers: Congress gets no vote on a tariff truce or an informal dialogue channel, though a binding trade treaty would eventually need Senate ratification. It is a useful case study in the limits of congressional oversight of presidential diplomacy, and in how personal, leader-to-leader summitry has become a routine tool of US foreign policy.

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



ICE Quietly Deletes Detainees From Its Own Locator

21 SEPTEMBER 2026

An Associated Press investigation published on 21 September found that US Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) had quietly removed thousands of detainees with final deportation orders from its public online locator system, a change made without announcement on 15 September. Roughly 16,000 people with final removal orders were booked into ICE detention in July alone, more than a third of that month's total, giving a sense of the scale involved.

“It's Just Another Iteration of Disappearing People”

Losing the ability to find someone in the system matters practically, not just symbolically: lawyers use the locator to find clients and file last-minute legal challenges such as habeas corpus petitions (court applications challenging the legality of someone's detention), and families use it to locate detained relatives. ICE would not confirm or deny the change to the AP, saying only that those with final removal orders were being prioritised for deportation.

WHY IT MATTERS This is a sharp illustration of due process, the constitutional guarantee of fair legal procedure, in practice: even non-citizens facing removal retain a right to challenge their detention, but that right means little if lawyers and family cannot locate them. It also shows how much immigration policy is shaped through low-visibility administrative decisions inside an executive agency, rather than through legislation or a court ruling, making it harder for Congress or the public to track.

SPECIFICATION LINKS Edexcel 9PL0 3A.4 (US Supreme Court and Civil Rights); AQA 7152 3.2.1.8 (Civil rights).

CHECKS ON THE EXECUTIVE



White House Bumps CNN From Air Force One, Again

25-26 SEPTEMBER 2026

The White House replaced CNN with the conservative outlet Real America's Voice News in the small press pool travelling on Air Force One for a presidential trip to a college football game in Knoxville, Tennessee, on 26 September. It is the latest step in an escalating dispute: the administration had already barred CNN, MS NOW and Politico from White House grounds, citing unspecified national security concerns.

“This Threatens Press Freedom and the Public's Right to Independent Journalism”

CNN and the other affected outlets are suing, arguing the bans violate the First Amendment's protection of a free press. A federal judge has already temporarily blocked the broader White House ban, ruling that the government's national security justification lacked factual support and that officials had offered no evidence explaining how the reporting in question had damaged security.

WHY IT MATTERS Press access to the president is not something the Constitution guarantees directly, but the courts have repeatedly found that once government grants that access, it cannot withdraw it because it dislikes a journalist's or outlet's coverage. This is a live example of judicial checks on executive power: an unelected federal judge, not Congress, is currently the main constraint on how the White House manages the press pool.

SPECIFICATION LINKS Edexcel 9PL0 3A.3 (US Presidency) and 3A.4 (US Supreme Court and Civil Rights); AQA 7152 3.2.1.3 (The executive branch of government: President) and 3.2.1.4 (The judicial branch of government).



Trump Administration Asks Court to Re-Detain Georgetown Scholar

22 SEPTEMBER 2026

The Department of Justice asked the Supreme Court, on 22 September, to overturn a lower court ruling that had freed Badar Khan Suri, a Georgetown University postdoctoral scholar and Indian citizen, from immigration detention. Suri was arrested by ICE outside his Virginia home in March 2025 during a wider crackdown on pro-Palestinian activists on US campuses; a district court ordered his release in May 2025, finding he was likely to prove his arrest had violated his First Amendment right to free speech and his right to due process. Solicitor General D. John Sauer, the government's top Supreme Court lawyer, argued that letting judges order releases like this would set a damaging precedent for immigration enforcement more broadly.

“That Is All Practically Disastrous”

In July 2026 the Fourth Circuit Court of Appeals upheld Suri's release by a 2-1 vote, ruling that nothing in federal immigration law stopped judges from hearing detention challenges while deportation proceedings are ongoing. A different appeals court reached the opposite conclusion in a similar case involving the activist Mahmoud Khalil, leaving a split between the circuits (regional federal appeals courts) that the Supreme Court may now have to resolve.

WHY IT MATTERS This case tests how far the First Amendment's protection of free speech extends to non-citizens, and whether federal courts can still intervene once someone is in deportation proceedings. A circuit split, where different regional appeals courts reach opposite conclusions on the same legal question, is one of the clearest practical triggers for the Supreme Court to step in, since the same law is otherwise being applied differently depending on where a case is heard.

ELECTIONS, PARTIES & VOTING RIGHTS



Missouri's Redrawn Map Heads Back to the Supreme Court (for the Third Time)

21-24 SEPTEMBER 2026

A federal appeals court ruled, on 21 September, that Missouri must use its new Republican-drawn congressional map for November's midterm elections rather than the older 2022 map the state's own supreme court had favoured. The new map reshapes Kansas City's 5th District, currently held by Democrat Emanuel Cleaver, so heavily that about 59% of its voters would be new to the seat, and Republicans hope it could hand them seven of Missouri's eight House seats, one more than they currently hold.

“The Constitution Does Not Permit Missouri to Use a Different Congressional District Map”

The map has already been blocked twice by the Supreme Court earlier this year, after the campaign group People Not Politicians gathered enough signatures to force a statewide referendum on it. This time, the three-judge appeals panel put its own ruling on hold for a week to allow an appeal, and opponents have now asked the Supreme Court to intervene for a third time before the case, *People Not Politicians v. Onder*, is decided.

WHY IT MATTERS Redistricting fights like this test the balance between state control of elections and direct democracy tools, such as the referendum campaign that forced this dispute in the first place. It is also a clear example of the courts effectively deciding, sometimes with only days to spare before an election, the electoral map that millions of voters will use, raising questions about the proper limits of judicial involvement in what is, on paper, a legislative process.

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

IN OTHER NEWS

Shorter items worth your own further reading this week:

- **Third-country removals return to the Court.** The Trump administration has asked the Supreme Court, for a second time, to let it resume fast-tracked deportations of migrants to countries other than their own, in a case (*DHS v. DVD*) worth reading alongside this week's other immigration rulings.
- **A new push for bond hearings.** In a separate case, *Genalo v. D.C.*, the Court is being asked whether people held for prolonged periods in immigration detention have a right to a bond hearing, a question with direct consequences for due process.
- **Big Tech gears up for the midterms.** Campaign finance trackers report that major technology companies' lobbying operations show no sign of slowing as the 2026 midterm campaign intensifies, a useful current case study in pressure group influence on Congress.



histpology.co.uk

A-Level Politics · The Filibuster

SOURCES

Votebeat, 'Supreme Court rules in favor of Trump's SAVE system, but impact on 2026 election will be limited', 25 September 2026, votebeat.org

NPR, 'The Supreme Court revives the controversial SAVE data system', 25 September 2026, npr.org

CNN Politics, 'The Supreme Court's SAVE database ruling explained', 25 September 2026, cnn.com

CBS News, live updates, 'Trump, China's Xi wrap up state visit', 23-25 September 2026, cbsnews.com

US News & World Report, 'Four Takeaways From Trump's Summit With Xi in Washington', 24 September 2026, usnews.com

OPB / Associated Press, 'AP Exclusive: ICE hides locations of thousands of detainees with final removal orders', 21 September 2026, opb.org

Al Jazeera, 'White House bars CNN from Air Force One for Trump's upcoming trip', 26 September 2026, aljazeera.com

Al Jazeera, 'Trump admin asks top US court to reverse pro-Palestinian scholar's release', 22 September 2026, aljazeera.com

US News & World Report, 'Trump Administration Asks US Supreme Court to Allow Detention of Pro-Palestinian Scholar', 22 September 2026, usnews.com

KSAT, 'Appeals court favors Trump-backed Missouri congressional map, but Supreme Court will have final say', 21 September 2026, ksat.com

CNN Politics, 'Missouri's embattled, Trump-backed congressional map returns to Supreme Court for a third time', 23 September 2026, cnn.com

SCOTUSblog, 'Key takeaways from an active week at the court', September 2026, scotusblog.com

The Hill, 'DHS asks Supreme Court to resume third-country migrant removals', September 2026, thehill.com

SCOTUSblog, case page for *Genalo v. D.C.* (26-379), scotusblog.com

Issue One, 'As Big Tech Gears Up for the 2026 Midterms, Its Lobbying Operations Continue Unabated', issueone.org