

Doug Mills/Reuters

The Big Picture: Setting The Agenda

This week a new political world order took hold in Washington. President Trump touted his agenda in [his State of the Union address](#), but newly empowered House Democratic chairmen clapped back with their gavels.

A flurry of hearings showcased how the new majority plans to drive the message – at least on one side of the Capitol. Democrats held the first [gun control hearing](#) in nearly eight years, made the case to [try to get the president's tax returns](#) and scrutinized the administration's family separation policy. Then Acting Attorney General Matthew Whitaker [fielded pointed and hostile questions](#) about his comments on special counsel Robert Mueller's probe and other topics.

But behind the scenes 17 bipartisan negotiators are diligently racing against a Feb. 15 deadline to avoid another partial government shutdown. The effort, described as collegial and productive, is balancing requirements from the right and the left over the president's demand for a "wall." House Speaker Nancy Pelosi insists the government will remain open, but will the president want to move on from the fight that will undoubtedly factor in his 2020 re-election campaign?

— *Deirdre Walsh, NPR congressional editor*

Fact Check: State Of The Union

Saul Loeb/AFP/Getty Images

ICYMI: Top Stories

Race and Virginia history: Lawmakers on both sides of the aisle have called on Virginia Gov. Ralph Northam, a Democrat, to resign after a racist photo from his 1984 medical school book was uncovered. As NPR's Debbie Elliott reports, the controversy is a reminder of the [complicated racial history](#) underpinning much of Virginia politics.

Climate change: Democratic Rep. Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez and Sen. Ed Markey introduced [the framework for their “Green New Deal”](#) this week. The plan sets goals for drastic measures to cut carbon emissions across the U.S. economy, but as NPR’s Danielle Kurtzleben reports, the ambitious ideas face plenty of political blockades.

Cost of Trump travel: A new report revealed [the cost of four of President Trump’s trips](#) to his private Mar-a-Lago club in Florida. As NPR’s Brian Naylor reports, the Government Accountability Office found the four trips, made early in Trump’s presidency, cost taxpayers \$13.6 million.

Voting rights: Ahead of the 2020 presidential election, Democrats are putting a [renewed focus on voting rights and election security](#). But as NPR’s Miles Parks reports, it’s unclear whether any of that energy will lead to concrete changes before an election that cybersecurity experts are still worried about.

SCOTUS on abortion: In a 5-4 vote, the Supreme Court [temporarily blocked a Louisiana law](#) that requires any doctor performing an abortion to have admitting privileges at a nearby hospital. Chief Justice John Roberts joined the court’s four liberals in issuing the stay.

— *Brandon Carter, NPR Politics social media producer*

Amr Alfiky/NPR

Rep. Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez In The Spotlight

The Green New Deal legislation laid out by Democratic Rep. Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez and Sen. Ed Markey sets goals for some [drastic measures to cut carbon emissions](#) across the economy. In the process, it aims to create jobs and boost the economy. The plan is massively ambitious and faces political blockades.