# \*\*\*NOTES\*\*\*

Thanks for being so patient about Congress Bills.  I know they are near and dear to many of you.

Since we have nine (9) bills this season, we would like for students to have the opportunity to debate as many bills as possible.

Therefore, I suggest the following:

*Washington High School & Sumner DKC Middle School:*

**Session I**

ANWR (Arctic Drilling)

Space Colonization

Gerrymandering

**Session II**(Which is really a continuation of Session I)

Ice Breakers

Robot Tax

Tariffs

*LIncoln High School  and Arrowhead Middle School*

**Session I**

Youth Sports

D.E.I.

Term Limits

**Session II**(Which is really a continuation of Session i)

ANWR (Arctic Drilling)

Space Colonization

Gerrymandering

And that we just continue the rotation like that for each subsequent tournament.  That way, all nine bills would be debated--NO SUSPENSION of the docket.

Unlike policy debate, Congress students are not limited to the evidence and arguments provided (even at the first tournament).

# ANWR Bill

## Bill Text

**A Bill to Protect the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge**

01 BE IT ENACTED BY THE CONGRESS HERE ASSEMBLED THAT:

02 **SECTION 1.** The United States hereby prohibits any resource exploration or development of the

03 Arctic National Wildlife Refuge.

04 **SECTION 2. A.** Resource includes any naturally occurring organic or inorganic material, living or inert,

05 which can be used in the creation or maintenance of material products or energy sources.

06 **B.** Exploration is any activity intended to find, discover, or otherwise locate potential

07 sites which may contain resources. Exploration includes both invasive and non-invasive

08 activities intended to acquire new information.

09 **C.** Development is the preparation of sites for extraction or production.

10 **SECTION 3.** The Bureau of Land Management will oversee enforcement and adopt any necessary

11 enforcement mechanisms.

12 **SECTION 4.** This legislation will take effect on January 1, 2026. All laws in conflict with this legislation

13 are hereby declared null and void.

## Evidence

### Pro

#### Opening ANWR to resource development will cause irreparable damage to a fragile environment.

Rosen, 2025 (Yereth Rosen – Reporter in Alaska since 1987 covering environment, energy, business, and health, “Interior secretary announces plans to advance new Arctic National Wildlife Refuge oil leasing”, *Alaska Beacon*, March 20, https://alaskabeacon.com/2025/03/20/interior-secretary-announces-plans-to-advance-new-arctic-national-wildlife-refuge-oil-leasing/, shae)

Environmentalists criticized the Trump administration plans and said they will work to oppose them.

“If we let the Trump administration destroy Alaska’s irreplaceable wild places for corporate profits and polluting fossil fuels that no one needs, the damage will be severe and long-lasting,” Cooper Freeman, Alaska director at the Center for Biological Diversity, said in a statement.

“Trump wants to dig, burn and dump his way across Alaska’s finest wildlife refuges and national parks, giving away our public lands to put more money into the pockets of billionaires,” Freeman said. “Alaska’s most precious resources are its vast expanses of wild lands and habitat for wildlife like caribou and polar bears, and we’ll keep fighting hard to protect those beautiful places.”

The national Sierra Club also weighed in.

“The Sierra Club and its millions of members and supporters across the country stand with the Gwich’in and Alaska Natives in opposing these actions. We will do everything in our power to stop the giveaway and preserve our wild and special places for the next generation,” Ben Jealous, executive director of the Sierra Club, said in a statement.

The Gwich’in, Indigenous tribal members from northeastern Alaska and northwestern Canada, have been among the most ardent opponents of oil development in the refuge.

#### Economic benefits are wildly overstated – most estimates are decades old and no one actually knows how many resources are there.

Rosen, 2025 (Yereth Rosen – Reporter in Alaska since 1987 covering environment, energy, business, and health, “Interior secretary announces plans to advance new Arctic National Wildlife Refuge oil leasing”, *Alaska Beacon*, March 20, https://alaskabeacon.com/2025/03/20/interior-secretary-announces-plans-to-advance-new-arctic-national-wildlife-refuge-oil-leasing/, shae)

Economic report questions leasing benefits

Meanwhile, a new report from a nonpartisan organization describes development supporters’ estimates of fiscal benefits from Arctic refuge leasing as vastly exaggerated.

Rather than generating more than $1 billion for the federal treasury, as predicted by development supporters, sales of oil leases in the refuge would generate only $3 million to $30 million, said the report issued Thursday by the nonprofit group Taxpayers for Common Sense.

That means revenues from oil leasing in the wildlife refuge would amount to less than 0.001% of an offset to the $4.5 trillion in tax cuts that the Trump administration and Congress have proposed, the report said.

“Continuing to promote Arctic drilling under the illusion of future revenue is a waste of taxpayer time and resources,” concludes the Taxpayers for Common Sense report.

The estimate is based on past data from 20 years of oil leasing on Alaska’s North Slope.

The $3 million estimate assumes that 10% of the refuge’s coastal plan is leased. Even if all 1.56 million acres of the coastal plan were leased, the estimated return to the federal government would be no more than $30 million – and there has never been a lease sale on the North Slope in which all bids were received on all offered tracts, the report notes.

#### Private companies don’t want ANWR contracts anyways.

Rosen, 2025 (Yereth Rosen – Reporter in Alaska since 1987 covering environment, energy, business, and health, “Interior secretary announces plans to advance new Arctic National Wildlife Refuge oil leasing”, *Alaska Beacon*, March 20, https://alaskabeacon.com/2025/03/20/interior-secretary-announces-plans-to-advance-new-arctic-national-wildlife-refuge-oil-leasing/, shae)

In 2017, the year the tax bill was passed and signed into law, the Congressional Budget Office estimated that the two lease sales it mandated would generate a total of $2.2 billion in revenues over 10 years, to be split evenly between the federal and state governments.

Rather than attract a bidding rush, the two past ANWR lease sales drew no bids from any major oil companies. Bidding in the first sale, in 2021, was paltry and came mostly from the Alaska Industrial Development and Export Authority, a state-owned development agency. The lease sale four years later drew no bids.

That experience was part of the information considered in the new analysis released by Taxpayers for Common Sense.

“Including new ANWR lease sales as a revenue raiser in budget reconciliation underscores a fundamental disconnect between lofty promises and fiscal reality. The ANWR leasing program was sold as a financial boon for taxpayers, but the numbers tell a different story. Based on past lease sales, industry trends, and financial constraints, the claim that drilling in ANWR will deliver substantial revenue is misleading at best,” the report said.

### Con

#### Opening ANWR to oil and gas development will create energy independence and boost the economy as a whole.

Rosen, 2025 (Yereth Rosen – Reporter in Alaska since 1987 covering environment, energy, business, and health, “Interior secretary announces plans to advance new Arctic National Wildlife Refuge oil leasing”, *Alaska Beacon*, March 20, https://alaskabeacon.com/2025/03/20/interior-secretary-announces-plans-to-advance-new-arctic-national-wildlife-refuge-oil-leasing/, shae)

Two months after a lease sale in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge failed to draw any bids, the Trump administration Department of the Interior said on Thursday it is taking steps to sell leases across much more territory in the refuge.

All of the 1.56-million-acre refuge coastal plan will be opened to oil leasing, Interior Secretary Doug Burgum said in a statement. The Bureau of Land Management, an Interior agency, will make that happen, reversing Biden administration environmental protections in the area, he said.

“It’s time for the U.S. to embrace Alaska’s abundant and largely untapped resources as a pathway to prosperity for the Nation, including Alaskans,” Burgum said in the statement. “For far too long, the federal government has created too many barriers to capitalizing on the state’s energy potential. Interior is committed to recognizing the central role the State of Alaska plays in meeting our nation’s energy needs, while providing tremendous economic opportunity for Alaskans.”

The department did not release any more information about the specific steps to be taken, and no new rule proposals were issued as of Thursday afternoon.

Intentions for more ANWR oil development were already declared in an Inauguration Day executive action issued by President Donald Trump called “Unleashing Alaska’s Extraordinary Resource Potential.” They were also declared in a follow-up secretarial order that Burgum issued on Feb. 3.

In addition to planning for expanded ANWR leasing, Interior’s BLM is taking steps to expand oil development in the National Petroleum Reserve in Alaska, on the west side of the North Slope, Burgum said in his statement. Most of the refuge will be open to development, reversing protections that had kept about half of it off-limits, Burgum said.

And the BLM will be revoking Biden administration actions that maintained protections for lands along the trans-Alaska pipeline corridor and Dalton Highway north of the Yukon River, Burgum said in his statement.

Those plans were included as well in the presidential and secretarial orders issued in January and February. They would affect several Biden-era environmental policies in Alaska that Gov. Mike Dunleavy and other Trump supporters have asked the new administration to revoke.

The Arctic National Wildlife Refuge has been the subject of decades of debate and controversy. Alaska politicians, Inupiat organizations and other development supporters say the refuge’s coastal plain could produce a new oil bonanza; environmentalists and some Indigenous tribal members say it should be protected because of its importance to the Porcupine Caribou herd — one of the few tundra caribou herds not in decline — and other Arctic natural resources.

Mixed responses

In a statement, Dunleavy called Burgum’s announcement “more great news for Alaska.”

“I want to thank President Trump and Interior Secretary Burgum for their commitment to work on behalf of Alaska to ensure that our great state and its resources can continue to be a solution for many of America’s challenges. The news today will provide more investment opportunities, more jobs, and a better future for Alaskans. We look forward to our continued work with President Trump and his administration to move Alaska and our country forward,” Dunleavy said in his statement

U.S. Sen. Dan Sullivan, R-Alaska, in his annual speech to the Legislature on Thursday, celebrated Burgum’s announcement and praised Trump for his executive orders.

“Alaska has never seen such a positive signal directly from a U.S. president that we should pursue our vision of a state that seeks private sector wealth and job creation with a federal government that is a partner in opportunity, not a hostile opponent,” Sullivan said in the speech.

That includes reinstatement of the ANWR leasing program, “which was in the law,” Sullivan said, referring to the 2017 tax act that mandated at least two lease sales in the refuge coastal plan.

#### Resource development in ANWR is uniquely valuable for the local Iñupiat people.

Rosen, 2025 (Yereth Rosen – Reporter in Alaska since 1987 covering environment, energy, business, and health, “Interior secretary announces plans to advance new Arctic National Wildlife Refuge oil leasing”, *Alaska Beacon*, March 20, https://alaskabeacon.com/2025/03/20/interior-secretary-announces-plans-to-advance-new-arctic-national-wildlife-refuge-oil-leasing/, shae)

Burgum’s announcement also got a favorable response from Inupiat leaders on the North Slope who have supported oil development there as a vital source of revenue and jobs.

One was Charles Lampe, president of Kaktovik Iñupiat Corp., the for-profit corporation owned by the Native residents of a village at the northern edge of the refuge. Among many in Kaktovik, a village of about 270 people, oil development in the refuge coastal plain has long been viewed as a promising local opportunity.

“We applaud today’s decision by DOI and Secretary Burgum, which upholds both the 2017 Tax Cuts and Job Act and overwhelming support from our community for development opportunities on the Coastal Plain,” Lampe said in a statement. “As the only community within ANWR’s 19-million-acre boundaries, we have fought for years for our right to self-determination and local economic development in our Indigenous homelands. Secretary Burgum’s decision today suggests our community’s voice is finally being heard in Washington.”

Lampe’s statement was issued by an organization called Voice of the Arctic Iñupiat, a coalition of North Slope municipal governments, tribes, corporations and other entities.

# DEI Bill

## Bill Text

**A Bill to Require Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion in all Public Institutions**

01 BE IT ENACTED BY THE CONGRESS HERE ASSEMBLED THAT:

02 **SECTION 1.** The United States hereby establishes and fully funds Diversity, Equity, and Inclusions practices

03 and procedures in all institutions receiving public funding.

04 **SECTION 2. A.** Diversity, Equity, and Inequality programs and procedures shall at least include:

05 mandatory diversity training, the use of diversity statements in hiring and promotion,

06 the consideration of race, sex, gender, age, sexual orientation, disability, socioeconomic

07 status, religious beliefs in admissions or employment, and the teaching of racial and

08 gender diversity.

09 **B.** Public funding includes any dollars appropriated through governance whether

10 federal, state, county, or municipal.

11 **C.** In the case that these practices and procedures violate the constitution, new practices

12 and procedures will be created.

13 **SECTION 3.** The U.S. Office of Civil Rights in coordination with the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity

14 Commission will work to implement and enforce this bill.

15 **SECTION 4.** This legislation will take effect on January 1, 2026. All laws in conflict with this legislation

16 are hereby declared null and void.

## Evidence

### Pro

#### DEI is part of the broader process of eliminating systemic injustices that foreclose equal opportunities to different groups of people.

Dunn, 2020 (Lisa Dunn – Marketing and Communications Writer at KSS Architects, “What Is Diversity, Equity & Inclusion (DEI)?”, *InclusionHub*, November 6, https://www.inclusionhub.com/articles/what-is-dei, shae)

In the push to make the world a more inclusive place, experts and activists utilize specific terminology when describing inclusion work’s goal: to transform society into a more just place.

If you’re new to the world of diversity and inclusion, however, it can sometimes feel like such users are speaking an entirely new language, which can make dipping your toes into this culture quite intimidating.

Here’s a useful breakdown of several associated phrases, acronyms and words, and why they’re important.

**Key diversity and inclusion terms include:**

**D&I**: Diversity & Inclusion

**DEI**: Diversity, Equity & Inclusion

**DIB**: Diversity, Inclusion & Belonging

**DEB**: Diversity, Equity & Belonging

These may seem identical, but there are significant differences. Let’s unpack them a bit more.

**Diversity**:

Acknowledges all the ways people differ: race, sex, gender, age, sexual orientation, disability, socioeconomic status, religious beliefs, and more.

**Inclusion**:

Is about diversity in practice. It’s the act of welcoming, supporting, respecting, and valuing all individuals and groups.

**Equity**:

Is often used interchangeably with equality, but there’s a core difference: Where equality is a system in which each individual is offered the same opportunities regardless of circumstance, equity distributes resources based on needs. We live in a disproportionate society, and equity tries to correct its imbalance by creating more opportunities for people who have historically had less access.

**Belonging**:

Infers that an equitable structure is in place and functioning to make all people, no matter their differences, feel welcome. When you reach for equity, you’re striving for a system that benefits everyone, no matter their circumstance. Belonging is when this not only works, but no one feels as if their inclusion is questioned.

Equity, diversity, and inclusion all mean different things, but interact with and rely on one another. Equity is the goal of diversity and inclusion.

**Justice**:

Is the mission of equity, in which an equitable system works so well it eventually eliminates the systemic problems driving the need for the latter. In other words, everything is fairly and evenly distributed to people no matter their race, gender, physical ability, or other personal circumstances.

Where D&I focuses on making all groups feel welcome, DEI also addresses the systemic ways access to things—such as education, food, the web, and more—are unequally distributed.

#### Attacks on DEI are ramping up under the Trump administration and conservative state governments – we need broad legal and financial supports to ensure a just society.

Adelabu et al, 2025 (Detris Honora Adelabu – Clinical Professor of Applied Human Development @ Boston University, Felicity Crawford – Clinical Associate Professor of Special Education in the Wheelock College of Education and Human Development @ Boston University, Linda Banks-Santilli – Clinical Associate Professor of Education in the Wheelock College of Education and Human Development @ Boston University, “Reducing diversity, equity and inclusion to a catchphrase undermines its true purpose”, *The Conversation*, April 22, https://theconversation.com/reducing-diversity-equity-and-inclusion-to-a-catchphrase-undermines-its-true-purpose-249717, shae)

Diversity, equity and inclusion, which has become the catchphrase DEI, represents a commitment to fairness and to tackling racism and exclusionary policies that limit access to resources and perpetuate injustice.

The Trump administration’s attacks on DEI frame efforts toward equity and fairness as illegal, wasteful, immoral and shameful.

However, unfair access to resources and opportunities remains a daily reality in American society.

Consider persistent disparities in housing, education and employment that prevent access to resources and opportunities based on race.

These inequalities are also evident in health care and the criminal justice system.

African Americans, for instance, make up approximately 13% of the U.S. population. But they account for 53% of exonerations after wrongful convictions.

As public health expert David Ansell argues in his book “The Death Gap: How Inequality Kills,” these disparities are not just a matter of quality of life but of life itself.

Where people are born and how they live shape their access to health care, education, nutritious food, stable housing and fair treatment within the justice system. This inequity, Ansell argues, creates a “death gap” where systemic barriers to opportunity and well-being shorten lives.

As professors focused on human development and education, we are committed to building fair and equitable living and learning opportunities for all students. We believe reducing diversity, equity and inclusion to a catchphrase or acronym undermines its importance and purpose to tackle the racism and biases that contribute to unfairness and injustice.

**More than a single concept**

DEI is more than an acronym or catchphrase. When diversity, equity and inclusion is reduced to a buzzword, it undermines its importance and the depth of work required to create inclusive spaces.

Each component of DEI represents unique aims and challenges.

Diversity is the practice of involving people from a range of social and ethnic backgrounds who hold varying perspectives. Diversity includes the meaningful and intentional inclusion of those who have been historically underrepresented.

Equity is the practice of being fair and just, especially in a way that seeks to address existing inequalities.

Equity means providing fair access to opportunities and resources for people who might otherwise be excluded. This includes those who have been underrepresented due to historical and contemporary biases.

This inequity is illustrated by education funding disparities where public schools attended by majority Black and Latino students receive less funding than majority white, affluent schools.

Inclusion is the state of being included within a group in a way that establishes a feeling of being welcomed and respected.

**Broad benefits**

Consider the racial diversity in your neighborhood. To what extent is it racially diverse?

People of color in predominantly white neighborhoods face discrimination. This includes encounters with police and other community members who question their presence within spaces that have historically been majority white. However, diversity and inclusivity within communities contribute to prejudice reduction and improved race relations.

DEI can broadly benefit society.

Imagine going to the local grocery store and the doors open automatically as you approach. Upon exiting, you push your shopping cart toward the sloped sidewalk designed to provide easy access to the road surface. Although the automatic doors and sloped sidewalk were designed for individuals with physical disabilities, these examples of DEI initiatives make everyday life better for everyone.

**The danger of oversimplification**

Reducing diversity, equity and inclusion to a catchphrase can lead to a superficial understanding and application of the concepts.

Some organizations incorporate DEI language into their mission statement without committing to deeper changes that promote equity and fairness.

In higher education, institutions may promote DEI initiatives while failing to address inequities in access and opportunity among students and faculty. Despite decades of stated commitments to DEI, predominantly white higher education institutions have made little progress toward racially diversifying their faculty, leadership or student body.

For example, 72% of U.S. college and university presidents and 72% of faculty identify as white. Yet white adults make up just 60% of the U.S. population.

Additionally, some organizations hire chief diversity officers without allocating resources or power to enact meaningful policy changes. Such superficial steps toward DEI squander its potential to transform higher education to truly advance diversity, equity and inclusion.

**Backlash against DEI**

DEI is also susceptible to political manipulation and dismantling.

More than 440 anti-diversity, equity and inclusion bills have been introduced in 42 states since the 2023 Supreme Court decision that ended race-conscious college admissions.

States such as Florida, Texas and Kentucky have recently introduced policies to dismantle programs aimed at promoting racial and gender equity in education and the workplace.

Meanwhile, in recent years DEI officers and advocates have lost jobs in higher education and other organizations.

DEI has become a scapegoat for political and systemic failures.

President Donald Trump, for example, blamed diversity, equity and inclusion for a Washington, D.C., plane crash that killed 67 people in January 2025. And Missouri is suing Starbucks, claiming the coffeehouse chain’s DEI policies are increasing wait times for orders.

Diversity, equity and inclusion is not about individual prejudice or emotions. It’s about addressing the systemic historical exclusions of people of color and other underrepresented groups – people who have not had fair and equitable access to resources and opportunities in America.

### Con

#### The meaning of DEI is so amorphous that it results in the elimination of merit-based practices and stifles free speech through intimidation.

Schalin, 2021 (Jay Schalin - Director of Policy Analysis @ the James G. Martin Center for Academic Renewal, “The Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Movement: Tyranny Through Subverting Language”, March 15, https://jamesgmartin.center/2021/03/the-diversity-equity-and-inclusion-movement-tyranny-through-subverting-language, shae)

One of the left’s most successful tactics is the manipulation of language. The meaning of words is gradually but deliberately changed to alter perceptions and to enable large policy and cultural changes to occur without much notice.

Academia is especially vulnerable to such linguistic subterfuge, and in the past year, many universities have greatly advanced the radical agenda through “Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion” (DEI) policies. To most people who still understand those three words according to their traditional meanings, such policies sound benign or enlightening; many would be open to basing guidelines on them.

However, in the lexicon of today’s left-leaning academic bureaucracies, those words—taken individually or together—have new, specific meanings with a sinister bent.

The traditional definition of “diversity” generally means some sort of variation within a population. But it has undergone several transitions in recent times. First, it has been given a normative spin with connotations of goodness—“diversity is our strength,” for example—that Americans have largely accepted. But more recently, a second twist has occurred: The word “diversity” is now used as a descriptor for preferred demographic groups. An all-black gathering is considered to be diverse, while an all-white gathering is not. “Diverse” can even be used to describe an individual if they belong to the right demographic, a meaning that is completely incongruous and seems to be a contradiction of the word’s original definition.

“Equity” is perhaps the most troubling of the three terms. A Minding the Campus article discusses the etymology of the word; a close synonym of its historical meaning is “fairness.” And we’re all for fairness. But fairness, without context or further elaboration, is an elusive concept. Which version of fairness is meant? Is it based on pure meritocracy? Or maybe a sliding scale that mixes merit with indications of compassion and empathy? Or outright equality of outcomes?

According to the Minding the Campus article, “in the last several decades, and certainly in the last 5-10 years, the term equity has been stretched and twisted” into “a weapon to bludgeon our modern society into denying even the most basic differences between human beings.”

It now means that protected classes of people must have proportionate representation—or better—since “the mere fact that achievement gaps exist” between different demographic groups “is taken as proof that there is some inequity that must be remedied.” Those who use the word equity in this fashion invariably claim that the inequity is not due to the actions of individuals, but due to systemic bias, and that the structure of society or of an institution must undergo drastic changes to eliminate this bias.

Inclusion—once an innocent term intended to mean that all are permitted to attain membership in a group according to that group’s rules—now implies proportionate representation, even if the traditional standards for membership must be relaxed or altered to achieve such representation. Furthermore, it must be remembered that to include somebody in a group with a fixed capacity is to exclude somebody else who would otherwise be included.

When it comes to college admissions or hiring, exclusion of deserving individuals is indeed part of the “inclusion” equation.

But, when these three words are combined to form a policy of employment or institutional conduct today, they carry a meaning far beyond their individual meanings. Together they express an ideological agenda intended to produce equalized outcomes among all demographic groups, to include preferred people and deny those out of favor with the political elite, and to take power from one group and give it to others.

Whenever such policies are put in place—especially if mandatory—they produce additional consequences such as group intimidation, an oppressive workplace environment, and the stifling of free expression. This is especially troubling at institutions of higher education, where standards based on merit and the freedom to pursue truth and to exchange ideas are paramount.

#### DEI policies only result in tokenism.

Quinn, 2022 (Holly Quinn – Technical.ly's reporter-at-large, “When is your workplace DEI actually tokenism?”, *Technical.ly*, https://technical.ly/diversity-equity-inclusion/when-is-your-workplace-dei-actually-tokenism/, shae)

Ayodele “Ayo” Duyile was fresh out of college and in his first job as a software engineer when he got an opportunity to do recruitment on several HBCU campuses. His role was to meet promising students of color and help them bridge the industry’s racial gap.

“I was the only Black software engineer [at the company],” Duyile said. “At the time, I was like, ‘This is pretty cool. I’m fresh out of school, a software engineer making good money. This is just awesome, and the company actually reached out to me to work with them on campus recruiting with HBCUs. I can pay it forward.'”

And he did meet plenty of talented students looking for their first break in tech out of schools like Howard University, Norfolk State and Hampton University. As time went on, though, the cracks started to show.

“I would notice that none of these people that I’ve met at these hiring events would actually make it into the interview round,” he said. “Obviously there were no offers extended. So, after months went by, I realized that this was an act of tokenism – essentially, [the company held the events] just to check a box to say, ‘We were here, and we were present, we showed up.’ I didn’t realize that I actually had a part in that as well, and it left me with a bad taste in my mouth. I ultimately left the hiring team for this reason, and ultimately left the company for this reason, too.”

Duyile, now a senior technical product manager at Google, adjunct professor at Temple University, and founder of backdoortech.io and the nonprofit Techsgiving.org, shared this experience with tokenism during his webinar “Avoid ‘tokenism without change:’ The ethics of brand marketing of company diversity,” part of Technical.ly’s Most Diverse Tech Hub initiative.

**What is tokenism?**

The definition of tokenism, Duyile says, is the policy or practice of making only a symbolic effort to increase diversity or otherwise include underrepresented groups.

Examples, many shared by webinar participants, include:

* Juneteenth branding
* Increasing diversity only on the entry level, not the leadership level
* Announcing intentions for hiring a chief diversity officer when police brutality is in the headlines
* Hiring a DEI recruiter but giving them no voice or budget
* Hiring a person of color in a leadership position in order to pass off a failing company to them
* Events that support DEI but no policies to support diverse employees
* A company that lacks diversity putting Black and Latinx people prominently in their marketing materials
* Using diverse personnel as the voice of the company when a problem arises relating to DEI issues
* Empty bandwagon gestures — a well-known example being the “black square” social media trend after George Floyd’s death
* Hiring a diversity council with no diversity in its leadership positions
* Focusing on diversity in hiring but not retention

“There’s such a movement for diversity in tech, and I love that,” Duyile said. “But we’re talking about people landing roles when we should really be talking about people thriving in these roles and staying in these roles. Some of this is on personnel, but a lot of this is actually on the company’s culture as well. A lot of these companies are looking to check boxes and say they hit their goal. That is tokenism.”

# Gerrymandering Bill

## Bill Text

A Bill to Establish Independent Redistricting Commission to Abolish Gerrymandering

01 BE IT ENACTED BY THE CONGRESS HERE ASSEMBLED THAT:

02 **SECTION 1.** The United States hereby establishes Independent Redistricting Commission in each of the

03 50 states to redraw congressional district lines every 10 years following the U.S. Census

04 Demographic shift. The Independent Redistricting Commission will be created by the state.

05 **SECTION 2. A.** Independent Redistricting Commission will have its members selected to reflect the

06 state's geographical, racial, gender, and political diversity. The commission would

07 require 12 members, with four chosen from the two major parties respectively and

08 four independents. Any map will require eight members voting in favor of the map

09 to pass.

10 **B.** Each state will create its own independent redistricting commission. State legislatures

11 shall only reject the district map if they are found to violate the state Constitution or

12 the Constitution of the United States.

13 **C.** The independent commission will be established every ten years according to the U.S.

14 Census demographic survey.

15 **D.** In the case that these maps violate the constitution, redistricting process will be done

16 repeatedly until a map is approved.

17 **SECTION 3.** The Federal Election Commission will work alongside states to implement this bill. The

18 Federal Election Commission will intervene if it’s observed that there exist any

19 discrepancies in any of the terms listed above.

20 **SECTION 4.** This legislation will take effect on January 1, 2026. All laws in conflict with this legislation

21 are hereby declared null and void.

## Evidence

### Pro

#### Gerrymandering erodes America’s democratic principles and upholds racial injustice.

Li, 2025 (Michael Li – Senior Counsel in the Brennan Center’s Democracy Program specializing in redistricting, voting rights, and elections, “Gerrymandering Explained”, Brennan Center for Justice, August 9, https://www.brennancenter.org/our-work/research-reports/gerrymandering-explained, shae)

Every 10 years, after the census, states redraw the boundaries of congressional and state legislative districts to reflect population changes, a process known as redistricting. Done well, it’s a chance to create maps that elect legislative bodies that fairly represent communities and that are, in the words of John Adams in 1776, an “exact portrait, a miniature” of the people as a whole. Redistricting also takes place at the local level to redraw the boundaries of districts used to elect the members of bodies such county commissions, city councils, and school boards.

But redistricting also is a chance for those in control of the process to rig maps to favor certain candidates or political parties, a practice known as partisan gerrymandering.

Although gerrymandering has long been a problem in the United States, the redistricting cycle after the 2020 census was the first since the Supreme Court’s 2019 ruling that gerrymandered maps can’t be challenged in federal court. Since then, Americans have seen gerrymandering ramped up to unprecedented levels in many places — and the worst may be yet to come.

Here’s what to know about partisan gerrymandering and how it impacts our democracy.

**Partisan gerrymandering is undemocratic.**

Elections are supposed to produce results that reflect the preferences of voters. But when maps are gerrymandered, politicians and the powerful choose voters instead of voters choosing politicians. The result is skewed, unrepresentative maps where electoral outcomes are virtually guaranteed, even when voters’ preferences at the polls shift dramatically. In extreme cases, the party drawing the maps may even be able to win a majority of seats even though it wins only a minority of the vote.

These line drawing abuses are especially frequent when one political party has sole control of the process. Under single-party control, map drawing tends to occur with inadequate transparency, with partisan concerns taking priority over the fair representation of the public as a whole.

**There are multiple ways to gerrymander.**

The easiest way to understand gerrymandering is through the lens of two basic techniques: cracking and packing.

Cracking splits groups of disfavored voters among multiple districts. With their electoral strength divided, cracked groups struggle to elect their preferred candidates in any of the districts because they are too small a share of the electorate to be effective.

A screen shot of a computer

AI-generated content may be incorrect.

Packing is the opposite of cracking. With packing, map drawers cram members of disfavored groups or parties into as few districts as possible. The packed groups are able to elect their preferred candidates by overwhelming margins, but their voting strength is weakened everywhere else.

A group of people with arrows pointing to each other

AI-generated content may be incorrect.

These techniques are not mutually exclusive — both may be deployed by map drawers to engineer a decided partisan advantage.

**Don’t judge a district by its shape.**

A group of colorful shapes

AI-generated content may be incorrect.

While gerrymandering sometimes results in oddly shaped districts, that isn’t always the case. A smart gerrymanderer can create cracked and packed districts that look neat and square but nonetheless skew heavily in favor of one party. North Carolina’s current congressional map is a case in point. Although the districts lines might look normal, they sort voters with such careful precision that Republicans are virtually assured of winning 10 of the state’s 14 congressional races and could win as many as 11 — a wildly skewed result for a perennial battleground state that regularly elects Democrats to statewide offices.

Conversely, odd-looking districts may be so shaped simply because they follow a geographic feature such as a river or city boundaries or because they keep together communities that have common identities or important shared representational needs.

**Gerrymandering impacts the balance of power.**

Current congressional maps show the power of gerrymandering.

After the 2020 census, Republicans controlled the redistricting process in more states than Democrats, and used this advantage aggressively. By Brennan Center estimates, maps used in the 2024 election had on average a net 16 fewer Democratic or Democratic-leaning districts than maps than complied with the strong anti-gerrymandering standards in the stalled federal Freedom to Vote Act.

Maps in Texas and Florida are especially skewed, but North Carolina provides one of the most striking examples of the power of gerrymandering to affect the balance of power, not only in a state but nationally. After the North Carolina Supreme Court struck down the state’s 2021 congressional map as an impermissible partisan gerrymander under the state constitution, the court put in place a map drawn by court-appointed experts. Using that map in the 2022 midterms, the state sent an even number of Democrats and Republicans to the U.S. House, a result in well in keeping with the Tar Heel State’s battleground politics.

But then, after changes to the composition of the state supreme court, the court reversed its recent ruling and said it would no longer police partisan gerrymandering. Free to gerrymander, the Republican-controlled legislature redrew the map, and after the 2024 election, North Carolina saw three Democratic districts flip to Republicans, enough to give control of the U.S. House to the GOP by a slim margin. Another Democratic district narrowly avoided flipping.

To be sure, Republicans weren’t alone in gerrymandering. Democrats in Illinois, for example, boldly redrew their state’s congressional map to reduce Republicans to holding just 3 of 17 seats, the fewest number of Republican seats since the Civil War. By contrast, the Brennan Center estimates that a fair Illinois map would have around 6 GOP seats.

**The problem of gerrymandering is getting worse.**

Gerrymandering is not new. Even the founding generation, for all its lofty democratic ideals, was not above putting a thumb on the scale. Elbridge Gerry, for whom the practice of gerrymandering is named, was both a signer of the Declaration of Independence and a member of the Constitutional Convention. And in designing Virginia’s very first congressional map, Patrick Henry famously attempted to draw district boundaries that would block his rival, James Madison, from winning a seat.

However, while gerrymandering dates back to the earliest days of the nation, it has also changed dramatically since the founding. Today, intricate computer algorithms and detailed data about voters’ political preferences and behavior allow map drawers to draw districts with surgical precision. Where gerrymanderers once had to pick from a few maps drawn by hand, they can now create and pick from thousands of computer-generated options.

Add to that a harsh new reality: Map drawers in most of the country no longer have to fear judicial intervention. In the 2019 case Rucho v. Common Cause, the Supreme Court held that while gerrymandering was “inconsistent with democratic principles,” gerrymandering claims were a “political question” beyond the reach of federal courts to address. This follows an earlier Supreme Court case, LULAC v. Perry, which greenlighted the practice of mid-decade redistricting for partisan purposes.

**Gerrymandering affects all Americans, but some of its most significant costs are borne by communities of color.**

Targeting the political power of minority communities is often a key element of partisan gerrymandering. This is especially the case in the South, where white Democrats are a comparatively small part of the electorate and often live — problematically from the standpoint of gerrymander-minded map drawer — in the same neighborhoods and communities as white Republicans. Even with computer-assisted slicing and dicing, it can be hard to put together a map that has the desired partisan effect simply by targeting white voters.

By contrast, continued residential segregation and racially polarized voting patterns, especially in southern states, mean that cracking or packing communities of color can be an efficient if cynical tool for creating advantages for the party in control of the map-drawing pen. This is true regardless of whether it is Democrats or Republicans drawing the maps.

Here again, the Supreme Court has made things worse. The Constitution and the Voting Rights Act prohibit racial discrimination in redistricting. But because there often is correlation between party preference and race, especially in the South, the Court’s ruling in Rucho opened the door for states to simply defend racially discriminatory maps on grounds that they were lawfully discriminating against Democrats rather than impermissibly discriminating against Black, Latino, or Asian voters.

South Carolina offers a vivid example of this dynamic. After the 2020 census, state legislators there redrew the coastal district of Republican congresswoman Nancy Mace to remove large numbers of Charleston-area Black voters. When Black voters challenged the reconfigured district in federal court as an unconstitutional racial gerrymander, lawmakers defended the map based on politics — namely, the desire to make Mace’s highly competitive district more reliably Republican. Targeting Black voters and their political power was just a means to an end. The Supreme Court agreed, finding that Black voters hadn’t proven that the map’s lines were based on race and not party affiliation.

South Carolina is far from alone. In states and localities around the country, naked partisanship is increasingly being used as an excuse for maps that dilute the voting power of the nation’s fast-growing communities of color.

**Congress can outlaw partisan gerrymandering.**

Even though the Supreme Court has been unwilling to constrain these antidemocratic abuses, Congress still can.

In 2022, the House passed the Freedom to Vote Act, a landmark piece of federal democracy reform legislation that would have prohibited mid-decade redistricting and banned partisan gerrymandering in congressional map drawing. It also would have improved legal protections for voters of color in redistricting, required greater transparency in the map-drawing process, and improved voters’ ability to challenge gerrymandered maps in court and win timely relief. However, while the bill had enough votes to pass in the Senate, it failed because the body fell two votes short of changing filibuster rules to allow a floor vote.

The vote split along party lines, with every Democrat in support and every Republican opposing. But with the Supreme Court having enabled a new round of aggressive mid-decade gerrymandering, and both parties seemingly eager to join in, that could change in time, with both Republicans and Democrats coming to see the benefits of having uniform national standards and a level playing field. Fair representation for all Americans depends on it.

#### Independent redistricting commissions already exist and serve as effective models.

Brennan Center for Justice, 2018 (“An Election Agenda for Candidates, Activists, and Legislators”, https://www.brennancenter.org/our-work/policy-solutions/democracy-election-agenda-candidates-activists-and-legislators, shae)

1. Make Redistricting Independent

Gerrymandering is hardly new. (In the very first congressional election, James Madison faced a district drawn by Patrick Henry designed to keep him from winning.) But it’s getting worse. Map-drawers can now use sophisticated data to lock in an advantage for a decade. This undermines American democracy by making elections a foregone conclusion and fueling a sense among voters that their ballots don’t really matter. 178

The tilt is especially severe when a single political party controls redistricting. Consider Pennsylvania, closely divided between the parties. Republicans managed to draw a map that guaranteed them a 13 to5 advantage in the state’s congressional delegation, both in elections where the Democrats did well at the polls (like 2012) and those where Republicans won more votes (like 2016). 179 Maps in other fiercely contested battleground states like North Carolina and Ohio produce similarly distorted outcomes. 180 Democratic map-drawers likewise engaged in aggressive gerrymandering this decade in places like Mary-land and Illinois. 181

The high-stakes battle to control Congress also fuels a financial arms race to control state legislatures ahead of each redistricting cycle. 182 The next round of redistricting is three years away, after the 2020 census, but Democrat- and Republican-aligned groups have already pledged to spend more money than ever before to gain the upper hand in map-drawing. 183

To stop gerrymandering abuses, the best approach is to take the power to draw congressional and legislative district lines out of the hands of lawmakers and give it to an independent redistricting commission. California 184 and Arizona 185 offer strong models.

States should establish commissions that:

•include members who are independents as well as Democrats and Republicans;

•are large enough to reflect the demographic and geographic diversity of a state;

•have strong conflict of interest rules and a vetting process that screens potential commissioners for their fitness to do the job;

•have clear, prioritized rules to guide map-drawing, including a ban on favoring particular political parties or candidates; and

•have strong rules on transparency and public participation to ensure that the public can meaning-fully engage in and help shape the process. 186

Even states that keep redistricting in legislators’ hands can ensure fairer maps. Measures can prohibit drawing maps to favor a political party or candidate, or require a bipartisan supermajority to adopt a map. For example, the Florida Constitution’s ban on partisan favoritism has allowed courts to step in and effectively police abuses. 187 Connecticut ensures that both parties have a seat at the table by requiring a supermajority to approve a map. 188 A proposed constitutional amendment passed by the Ohio legislature combines both of these approaches. 189 It requires supermajority support, including a specified level of support from the minority party, to approve a map without special rules, and imposes a ban on unduly favoring a political party if a map is passed without a supermajority.

Congress should also pass legislation requiring independent commissions for congressional redistricting, using its powers under the Constitution’s Elections Clause. A bill that provides a good starting point is the We the People Democracy Reform Act (S.1880), introduced by Sen. Tom Udall (D-N.M.). 190 Under this bill, each state with more than one congressional district would be required to establish are districting commission, based on California’s model, that includes Democratic, Republican, and independent members, among other provisions. 191

Where they have been adopted, redistricting reforms have been an overwhelming success. California and other states with commissions have experienced less contentiousness and less litigation while improving transparency, partisan competition, and creating a better fit between legislative outcomes and voters’ desires.192

These changes are popular with voters, who have enacted reforms most recently in California (2008 and 2010), Florida (2010), and Ohio (2015). 193 In Michigan, volunteers collected nearly 500,000 signatures to place a proposal to create an independent redistricting commission on the ballot in 2018, and strong citizen-led reform efforts are underway in Utah and Missouri, among other states. 194

Elected leaders increasingly support reform as well. Ohio Governor John Kasich recently described gerrymandering as “the biggest problem we have” and joined forces with other prominent Republican elected officials to ask the Supreme Court to end it. 195 Their calls have been echoed by numerous lawmakers of both parties. 196 Ohio lawmakers passed a proposal to reform congressional redistricting that will go before voters in May 2018. A proposed constitutional amendment to create an independent commission in Pennsylvania has likewise attracted 131 co-sponsors, including 46 Republicans.

### Con

#### Gerrymandering is a myth – both major parties engage in partisan districting – it all evens out nationally.

Galston, 2023 (William A. Galston – Senior Fellow of Governance Studies in the Center for Effective Public Management (CEPM) and Ezra K. Zilkha Chair in Governance Studies @ the Brookings Institute, The Brookings Institute, “The gerrymander myth”, March, 17, https://www.brookings.edu/articles/the-gerrymander-myth/, shae)

Journalists, pundits, and some political scientists argue that gerrymandering distorts representation and gives an unearned advantage to the Republican Party, which controls the majority of governorships and state legislatures. This belief has earned the redistricting process a secure place in the reform agendas of many activists. This may have been the case in the past, but a straightforward analysis shows that it isn’t true now and hasn’t been for several election cycles.

Here’s a simple measure of a fair distribution of House seats in our two-party system: each party ends up with the number of seats that corresponds to its share of the two-party popular vote. In last November’s midterm election, Republican House candidates received 50.6% of the national popular vote, which works out to 51.4% of the two-party vote. A strictly proportional allocation would have given Republicans 224 seats; they ended up with 222.

A fluke? By itself, maybe. But look at the past three cycles:

Share of the national popular vote (%) Number of Republican seats

Democrats Republicans Proportional\* Actual Difference

2018 53.4 44.8 198 200 +2

2020 50.8 47.7 211 213 +2

2022 47.8 50.6 224 222 -2

So why do so many well-informed observers believe that House elections structurally favor Republicans? The short answer is that until recently, they did. Here are the results of the four elections in the Tea Party era:

Share of the national popular vote (%) Number of Republican seats

Democrats Republicans Proportional\* Actual Difference

2010 44.9 51.7 233 242 +9

2012 48.8 47.7 215 234 +19

2014 45.5 51.2 230 247 +17

2016 48.0 49.1 220 241 +21

What changed? Two hypotheses fit the facts. First, Republicans caught Democrats flat-footed in the redistricting that followed the 2010 Census. Putting together a powerful plan called REDMAP, Redistricting Majority Project, they used sophisticated new software to gain Republican seats and translated their strong showing in state gubernatorial and legislative elections into district lines that favored their candidates. And second, because Democratic voters were more geographically concentrated in urban areas than Republicans were in the rest of the country, Republicans could more efficiently translate votes into House seats than could Democrats, who won supermajorities in urban areas but lost contested elections elsewhere. This made possible anomalies such as 2012, when Republicans ended up with a healthy majority of 234 seats, even though they lost the national popular vote.

But under the influence of the Tea Party and then Donald Trump, Republicans began running up supermajorities in small towns and rural areas while Democrats made gains in the suburbs, muting the Republicans’ “efficient distribution” advantage. And then, having been burned once, after the 2020 Census, Democrats were better prepared for redistricting than they had been a decade earlier and managed to fight Republicans to a draw when the results from the 50 states were aggregated.[i] Although no one planned it, the system now awards House seats fairly between the parties, not in every state, but nationally.

One sign of this new parity is that neither party enjoys an advantage in the most contested House seats. In 2022, 37 House contests were resolved by less than 5 percentage points. Of these seats, Republicans won 19, and Democrats, 18. In the prior election of 2020, the same number of contests —37 — were settled by less than 5 points, with Democrats winning 19 and Republicans, 18. Not only are the parties evenly balanced on this crucial measure, but redistricting seems to have made little if any difference.

As of now, anyway, neither party enjoys a significant aggregate advantage in either districting or geographical efficiency of voter distribution. Until this changes, the balance between the parties in the House will be decided more by the national popular vote than by any other factor. And because the parties are closely divided as well as deeply divided, relatively small changes in the distribution of the vote can lead to frequent changes of party control in the House.

#### Democrat gerrymandering is necessary to prevent the worst of Trump’s policies and actions. Even if gerrymandering is undemocratic, it is the only way to protect democracy.

Efros, 2024 (Gabe Efros – Opinion Columnist, “Gerrymandering can be a force for good”, *The Michigan Daily*, April 3, https://www.michigandaily.com/opinion/columns/gerrymandering-can-be-a-force-for-good/, shae)

In my most recent column, I explained why I believe Republicans are not a force for positive change in our country and how Democrats need to take a more active role in trying to stop them. In doing so, I advocated for the use of gerrymandering so that Democrats could retake control of the House of Representatives. Using the redistricting process to create deliberate electoral advantages can, along with other strategies, allow Democrats to regain their legislative control.

While undemocratic in nature, gerrymandering can be used as a radical process for progressive policy. With narrow margins in the house, it could very well decide who ends up with an advantage. In addition to an advantage, a larger Democratic majority would also be possible through gerrymandering, which would be advantageous for controlling what bills pass through the House. While redistricting is typically only done every 10 years following the U.S. Census, it can become a long, drawn out process. Even if historically Democratic states cannot be gerrymandered this election cycle, maps will be redrawn eventually, giving Democrats more opportunities to control the House.

A Democratic advantage would not only be convenient for passing strong Democratic legislation, but also justified, considering the increasingly radical nature of the Republican party. In a potential second Donald Trump presidency, a Democratic house will provide a safeguard against any potential far-right legislation that could be passed with a Republican majority.

The Republican Party prioritizes their loyalty to Trump, even if it means subverting democracy. This commitment is worrisome, and with a possible movement to repeal the 22nd Amendment, Republicans may have plans to keep Trump around longer than we think. As such, using gerrymandering to ensure a Democratic majority would become even more necessary.

Another way that strategic gerrymandering could help Democrats give themselves an advantage is by creating more competitive districts for Republicans. An example of this is Michigan’s 9th district, where, during the most recent Congressional elections, Democrats intentionally donated money and resources to a far-right wing Republican candidate during the Republican primary. As a result, the Republican candidate won his primary and went on to lose the general election. The candidate he beat in the primary was an incumbent — one of the more moderate Republicans in the House of Representatives and generally considered to be a better candidate in the general election.

This strategy, if applied in other congressional districts, can be very effective at generating a Democratic advantage in the House of Representatives from states that are not as solidly Democratic.

It’s important to clarify that gerrymandering is a transitory and temporary strategy. Democrats should use their eventual majority to get rid of gerrymandering for good. They have already proposed this bill in Congress to do this; they just need a majority to pass it. Gerrymandering itself could help them get there.

While it may seem counterintuitive to get rid of a strategy that helped Democrats obtain control in the first place, gerrymandering does not provide any merit to our democracy. The benefit to gerrymandering is not itself, but the fact that it can give Democrats an advantage in Congress.

Opponents of this strategy would point out the fact that in order to supposedly save our country’s democratic process, you are sacrificing it. If the Democrats, in any way, manufacture a house majority in their favor, many people may not see it as legitimate or democratic. Democrats have recently negated Republican gains by using gerrymandering, and further efforts to ensure a majority for their party could be seen as undemocratic. It is written in the Declaration of Independence that a government’s power is derived from the consent of the governed, and using this strategy definitely corrupts this principle.

These claims do hold legitimacy, but the threat that Republicans pose goes beyond traditional principle. Employing the use of election manipulation strategies may certainly delegitimize and harm our democratic processes in the short term. However, staving off the current Republican party and thus necessitating its reform will secure our democracy in the much longer term.

While using gerrymandering for political gain seems at odds to our democratic ideals, the current threat of an increasingly radical Republican party demands radical measures. Democratic control of the House, even if achieved through such means, would act as a barrier against potential far-right actions. Moreover, forcing the Republican party to reconsider its extreme elements will allow for a more stable and accountable political outlook in the future, ultimately strengthening rather than undermining democratic principles.

# Ice Breakers Bill

## Bill Text

**A Bill to Procure Nuclear-Powered Ice Breakers**

01 BE IT ENACTED BY THE CONGRESS HERE ASSEMBLED THAT:

02 **SECTION 1.** The United States hereby fully funds and constructs a fleet of nuclear-powered heavy,

03 Polar-class ice breaking vessels for the United States Coast Guard.

04 **SECTION 2. A.** The federal government will contract with private shipbuilding organizations to

05 design and construct no fewer than twelve (12) ships.

06 **B.** Each ship must be powered by a small modular reactor.

07 **C.** Construction of the first three (3) ships must be completed within two (2) years with an

08 additional three (3) ships constructed every two (2) years thereafter.

09 **SECTION 3.** The Department of Homeland Security will oversee design and construction to fit the needs

10 of the United States Coast Guard as well as timely construction.

11 **SECTION 4.** This legislation will take effect on January 1, 2026. All laws in conflict with this legislation

12 are hereby declared null and void.

## Evidence

### Pro

#### Rather than relying on allied ships, the US should construct its own nuclear-powered icebreakers which provide better and more reliable access to the Arctic.

Julia Nesheiwat & Andro Mathewson 22. \*PhD, Distinguished Fellow at the Atlantic Council focused on Arctic policies, energy, and national security; \*\*master’s in international relations from the University of Edinburgh, Capability Support Officer at the HALO Trust. "Securing the north: Expanding the United States’ icebreaker fleet." Military Times. 1-26-2022. https://www.militarytimes.com/opinion/commentary/2022/01/26/securing-the-north-expanding-the-united-states-icebreaker-fleet/

One of the biggest challenges facing the United States’ capability and capacity to defend its interests in the far north is the dearth of icebreakers. Icebreakers are imperative to the national security of the United States and its Arctic territories. Their importance is also growing due to the continued melting of the polar ice caps, the encroachment of non-Arctic nations to the region, including China, and heightened tensions over pre-existing territorial disputes and new economic opportunities in the Arctic. However, despite their importance, the United States’ fleet of icebreakers has been severely neglected.

Icebreakers are indispensable to the United States for a multitude of reasons. Not only do they keep trade routes free from winter sea ice and escort shipping vessels safely through ice-covered passages, but they also help supply winter bases, oil rigs, drill sites, and scientific missions with the necessary equipment and cargo year-round. With the retreating northern ice caps, global shipping is increasingly using northern routes for Asia to European trade bypassing the Panama and Suez canal. These shifts can drastically cut shipping times but also allow nations with a significant arctic fleet to hold global trade at risk.

The icebreakers also serve the vitally important role of protecting energy claims and keeping fisheries from foreign exploitation. The U.S. Geological Survey estimates that the Arctic holds over 90 billion barrels of oil and 1,669 trillion cubic feet of gas, the majority of which is commercially viable. Additionally, Arctic fisheries offer a vast, and growing, source of wealth for Arctic nations — the average annual catch value is estimated at over $500 million, another incentive for non-arctic states to encroach on the region. Just last year a massive Chinese fishing fleet encroached on U.S. territorial waters with no regard for international law or sustainable fishing regulations.

Icebreakers often serve as moving research institutions and platforms with teams conducting scientific research in the Arctic, including vital climate change-focused research helping to tackle one of the region’s largest threats. The simple presence of icebreakers in the Arctic also sends an important message to potential adversarial nations showcasing the United States’ readiness and willingness to defend its interests in the region.

Despite these growing needs, the U.S. Coast Guard currently only operates two icebreakers, the Polar Star (already 10 years over its 30-year life expectancy) and Healy (which suffered an electrical fire in 2020 and was only recently repaired), both diesel-powered. The only other two U.S.-based icebreakers are privately owned or operated by the University of Alaska.

In comparison, China operates two (and is developing a third), while Russia’s armed forces operate at least 46 — including three that are nuclear-powered, extending both their power and durability. These numbers do not take into account those currently under construction or planned, and both nations are investing heavily in expanding their fleets. Russia has also re-militarized a dozen Cold War-era arctic bases to expand its naval presence in the region and to use as berths for its numerous active icebreakers.

NATO allies in the region, such as Norway and Canada, also own icebreaker fleets. However, none of them are nuclear-powered. Norway’s fleet is focused on territorial defense against increasingly aggressive Russian incursions while Canada’s fleet is currently comprised of smaller vessels focusing on scientific research and search and rescue efforts. Thus, the U.S. cannot rely on its Northern or European allies for defense posturing in the Arctic. This lack of a substantial U.S. fleet of icebreakers, the absence of nuclear-powered vessels, and reliance on allied icebreaker posturing in the region is a major flaw in the US national security strategy and defensive umbrella, which needs to be addressed as quickly as possible and is an important strategic investment the United States needs to make immediately.

Currently, the two Coast Guard icebreakers fall under the jurisdiction of the Department of Homeland Security whose budget is anemic compared to the Department of Defense. The Coast Guard does not have the budget to obtain enough icebreakers to contest Russian or Chinese presence in the Arctic — each heavy icebreaker has an average cost of approximately $800 million. While, accumulating the same number of icebreakers as Russia is unnecessary, moving forward all potential solutions to securing America’s North requires the purchase of icebreakers, regardless of their status: new or used. Coast Guard Commandant Karl Schultz has stated that “a fleet of nine U.S.-flagged icebreakers” would be sufficient to meet our economic and security needs in the far north.

Thankfully, Congress has already initiated expanding America’s arctic security program by authorizing the construction of six new Polar Security Cutters (PSCs), three heavy and three medium icebreakers. However, it is only actively funding the first four.

The next vital step to securing the North is to fully fund and expedite the construction of these six PSCs, especially given the fact that the first PSC is currently planned to be delivered only in late 2024 if it stays on schedule. This is extremely important as expanding the current fleet’s missions comes with opportunity costs, thus necessitating a larger fleet to be able to cover all possible icebreaker missions in the region.

Another longer-term option, which can also be done simultaneously to the PSC program, is to increase the available funding for the Coast Guard, specifically focused on Arctic security, to establish partnerships with private corporations to design and construct the United States’ first nuclear-powered icebreaking vessel. While more expensive, nuclear icebreakers come with many benefits over diesel-powered vessels, including both longevity, range, and power, including increasingly vital, soft power. With the additional range and longevity of nuclear icebreakers comes a reduced need for the United States to build expensive and difficult to maintain arctic bases — the icebreakers become de facto mobile bases. Additionally, the nuclear-powered ships can conduct longer and more missions, cementing U.S. positioning in the region.

A different and swifter approach would involve working with the Department of the Navy to authorize the purchase of an icebreaker under the jurisdiction of the U.S. Navy. This would not only expand the Navy’s mission to include patrolling of the far North but could also lead to involving NATO forces in the region. This would also be a welcome step to counteract Russia’s recent decision to establish a new Arctic fleet within their navy, acting as a strong signal of America’s willingness and readiness to defend its northern territories and those of its allies.

Regardless which option is given the go-ahead, it would also be beneficial to simultaneously encourage the development or purchase of private icebreakers, whether by corporations or public institutions. For example, there is also an existing U.S. icebreaker available for purchase, the Aiviq, currently owned by Edison Chouest Offshore, valued at only $150 million. There are also ships in Finland available for lease that could fill gaps until the PSCs come online. The private purchase and leasing options would maximize the United States’ presence in the region.

For the United States to remain economically and militarily competitive in the Arctic and maintain its territorial integrity in the region, it requires a substantial fleet of new, advanced, and durable icebreakers, as soon as possible. The first vital step is to fully fund and expedite the construction of the currently authorized six PSCs. These will enable the United States to continue to secure the freedom of the seas, ensure its national security, and expand economic and academic opportunities to its institutions in the region and beyond.

#### Icebreakers are key. They give the US a chance to develop a world-class shipbuilding industry it can’t find in other sectors.

Rana Foroohar 25. American author, business columnist and an associate editor at the Financial Times; also, CNN's global economic analyst. "Will Trump make ships great again?" Financial Times. 3-24-2025. https://archive.ph/msSi8#selection-1712.0-1829.13

The Biden administration previously identified icebreaker ships as a promising starting point, and I would expect continuity here. In addition to the geopolitical importance of the Arctic, it may be easier for the US to compete in markets for relatively specialised vessels — such as icebreakers — where price and quantity are not the only factors that buyers typically consider.

Moreover, there are some benefits to starting from virtually zero. The need to construct new facilities is an opportunity to deploy at scale the most advanced manufacturing technologies. It should also be easier to optimise the co-location of new commercial and defence production facilities, rather than deal with stranded legacy assets. This presents an opportunity to build a larger manufacturing ecosystem that includes the adjacent technologies, supply chains and applications required for any shipyard to operate effectively.

Ultimately, however, the shipbuilding industry is a game of competitive subsidisation. The major shipbuilding nations provide considerable support to their industries, and Michael Lind has recently shown how the elimination of subsidies under the Reagan administration resulted in the precipitous decline of US shipyards despite the Jones Act.

With that in mind, US policymakers will need to consider more robust forms of investment support, in addition to the measures already announced by the Trump administration. Both shipyards and the vessels they produce provide ample opportunities for creative public-private financing structures as well as procurement and contracting mechanisms. America has somehow managed to financially engineer seemingly everything except critical national security supply chains and technologies; shipbuilding offers a chance to rectify that.

### Con

#### Renewed shipbuilding can’t improve Naval readiness.

Jonathan Panter 25. Ph.D, is a Stanton nuclear security fellow at the Council on Foreign Relations and an American conservatism and governing fellow at the Manhattan Institute for Policy Research. He previously served as a surface warfare officer in the U.S. Navy. "Rolling Back Naval Forward Presence Will Strengthen American Deterrence." War on the Rocks. 2-7-2025. https://warontherocks.com/2025/02/rolling-back-naval-forward-presence-will-strengthen-american-deterrence/

**Naval forward presence** — the practice of maintaining combat-credible naval forces worldwide to **deter adversaries**, **reassure allies,** respond to crises, and perform constabulary functions for the global commons — has dominated U.S. foreign policy since the 1990s. Few critics dare question it. The concept’s supporters — under the illusion that “credibility anywhere is credibility everywhere” — darkly warn that rolling back presence operations **will** **embolden America’s adversaries**. The opposite is true. A **navy tasked to do all** these things **cannot do them all well.** Rolling back presence **will strengthen**, not **weaken**, **deterrence**. For too long, short-term thinking has taken priority over managing long-term risk. It’s time to flip the script. Readiness for **great-power conflict** — peace through strength rather than global policing — should once again be America’s **primary grand-strategic aim**. Too Busy, and Too Small Few Americans appreciate just how busy their navy is. At any time, over one-third of U.S. Navy ships are deployed — the greatest proportion in history. Sometimes these ships are training with allies and partners, buttressing American power. Sometimes they are responding to crises where legitimate American interests are at stake and force may be necessary. But many of the Navy’s overseas duties are unrelated to coercion or deterrence, including humanitarian operations, freedom of navigation transits, “maritime security” patrols in far-flung regions, or various missions under the nebulous banner of norms enforcement. As my research has shown, these **operations** come at a **cost**: They have **shrunk** and **weakened** the U.S. Navy’s **surface fleet** to a shadow of its former self. The reasons lie in politics, poor strategic foresight, and bureaucracy. While critics usually describe the problem as a mismatch between operational “demand” and the “supply” of ships, this mismatch is itself a symptom of an underlying national confusion about the purpose of the Navy itself. The hard truth is that stale ideas about America’s proper role in the world have outlived the geopolitical circumstances in which they germinated. After the Soviet Union dissolved, U.S. policymakers saw a new world marked by brush-fire conflicts, civil wars, and economic dislocation due to globalization. Global policing, albeit under more the palatable terms like “engagement” or “liberal internationalism,” became the dominant foreign policy consensus. To offer flexibility for these brush fires, the Navy designed its fleet around carrier strike groups and amphibious readiness groups. The Navy made this case — that an uncertain world required presence, and presence required carriers, amphibious ships, and supporting multi-mission combatants — in its own planning documents, and led a public relations campaign to this effect. The 1993 Bottom-Up Review (the Department of Defense’s seminal assessment of required force structure for the post-Cold War era), under a section entitled “naval presence,” explicitly stated that naval forward presence would require more large-deck ships than the Navy would need if it used the same force-planning metric as the other services (the two “major regional contingency” standard). In other words, “presence” as an idea was good for the Navy’s bottom line — at first. Circumstances soon changed. First, the large, exquisite ships that carrier strike groups and amphibious readiness groups required were expensive. Over time, this drove up customer costs and lifecycle costs, and inhibited alternative force structures and platform choices, because the coalition of contractors and policymakers benefiting from the presence-oriented force structure objected to changes. Accordingly, with time, the Navy purchased fewer vessels overall, and the fleet began to shrink. Meanwhile, the U.S. military’s geographic combatant commanders — empowered a few years earlier under the 1986 Goldwater-Nichols Act — began demanding surface ships for nearly every crisis that arose in their theaters. Policymakers, too, grew accustomed to “showing the flag.” Sending a carrier strike group to a hot zone was appealing, as it avoided the political risk and financial cost of overseas basing and was an easy way to ratchet diplomatic pressure up and down. In essence, the Navy did its job too well: It designed a fleet and promoted a concept for operating it that policymakers and combatant commanders found addictive. So, throughout the 1990s and into the 2000s, the surface fleet got busier and busier while becoming smaller and smaller. Like a car, a ship can only be run so hard until it becomes too expensive to maintain. As the Navy overused its ships, they retired early. Other ships picked up their slack and were then overused themselves. To support the rising tempo of operations, the Navy repeatedly delayed maintenance on ships. America’s shipyards, which required predictable contracts to remain economically viable, bled skilled laborers, driving up costs in an endless cycle. The result was that the surface fleet shrank from over 400 ships in 1994 to an all-time-low of 272 vessels during the Obama administration (today, it sits at around 300). Even with an ongoing multi-decade, multi-billion-dollar investment in the nation’s public shipyards, the U.S. Navy will not clear its maintenance backlogs until at least 2040. Even the chief of naval operations recently acknowledged that the fleet will not grow any time soon. Wargames indicate that, were the United States to fight China, the U.S. Navy might eke out a **nominal win**, but one that **blurs** the **line** between victory and defeat, setting back **American military power** for a **generation**. The Readiness Trade-Off How was all this allowed to happen? Everyone, from the combatant commanders to the Navy, lost sight of the trade-off between operational and structural readiness. “Operational” readiness refers to the ability of existing military units to fight tonight. “Structural” readiness refers to a military’s ability to generate sufficient mass for multiple rounds in a prolonged fight, including factors like the health of the defense-industrial base. In basic terms, an extremely high level of operational readiness is required for global policing duties; whereas if the goal is fighting a long war against a peer competitor, structural readiness is more important. If resources are finite (which they always are), the two trade off. In brief, for three decades, the U.S. Navy traded its structural readiness (for great-power conflict) for **operational readiness** (to support naval forward presence). It burned through its **ships**, and **debilitated its shipyards**, to make sure it could respond to whatever policymakers wanted, whenever they wanted it, no matter how irrelevant it was to **deterrence** and **warfighting**. This was not a problem in the 1990s, when the same fleet busy with presence operations could still fight off any foreseeable challenger. But by 2015, given the rise of China, the Navy, oversight agencies, contracted research organizations, and think tanks were all sounding alarms. Navy leaders begged Congress, time and again, to reduce the frequency with which Navy ships were deployed, so that the force could recoup its readiness. Then came the collisions. In 2017, two U.S. Navy destroyers, in separate incidents, crashed into commercial ships, and 17 American sailors lost their lives. Two investigations — Secretary of the Navy Richard V. Spencer’s Strategic Readiness Review and Chief of Naval Operations John M. Richardson’s Comprehensive Review — offered recommendations to restore the Navy’s readiness. The Navy’s highest-level investigation even recommended “condition[ing] congressional and executive branch leaders to accept that the higher cost and time to achieve established readiness standards will mean less Navy presence worldwide.” This never happened, because Congress continued to assume the Navy could balance both operational and structural readiness, as my research delineating the hearings after the accidents has shown. Legislation passed after the collisions resolved none of the Navy’s presence-induced headaches. Congress enacted reforms to restore operational readiness but ignored the Navy’s proposed reforms to improve its structural readiness. The Strategic Readiness Review had proposed changes to the Navy’s readiness commands (such as eliminating the so-called “Inouye Amendment”) and changes to the adjudication of combatant commanders’ requests for forces. Instead, what the Navy got was a little more officer training here, some sleep requirements for officers there. After dipping for one year after the collisions, the Navy’s operational tempo continued its inexorable annual rise that began in the 1990s. Presence was simply too popular an idea. **Shipbuilding is Not Enough** The U.S. Navy’s **readiness** for **sustained combat** — and hence its **ability** to deter China — is in a **catastrophic state**. The Trump administration should give the U.S. Navy a fighting chance to rebuild itself. It can start with the unfinished business of 2017, reforming the global force management process (the process by which the Department of Defense adjudicates combatant commanders’ requests for military forces) to prioritize structural readiness over emergent demands. In this process, the service chiefs and the joint staff consider combatant commander needs in their theaters and recommend service assets that can be made available to them. Should a combatant commander need forces in excess of this established allocation (an “emergent requirement”), he or she can submit a “request for forces.” The idea that the services should “just say no” to such requests is aspirational, but difficult. Why? Because — as the Strategic Readiness Review noted — the Navy has developed a culture of meeting non-stop (presence-driven) operational demands. As the review also points out, the multiple overlapping authorities and the adverse growth of staffs within the Navy has made tracking the long-term effects of operations on **structural readiness** a **nightmare**. In addition, the staff of the chief of naval operations, located in the Pentagon, appears biased towards operational demands and can lose sight of long-term readiness. The problem is not that the Navy lacks input in global force management, but that the Navy still does not “say no” enough. To resolve this, the review recommended establishing the initial force availability as the “maximum supportable peacetime force,” such that any further combatant commander requests for forces can only be met with forces moved from other theaters. This is, in essence, a hard cap on what the Navy can do, ensuring that unready units are never sent to meet the latest and greatest combatant commander request. But emergent demands aside, Navy operational tempo will still **remain too high** to restore **structural** **readiness**. The **Trump** administration should therefore reevaluate the idea of **naval forward presence** itself: the notion that America’s Navy is foremost a provider of global goods, and a global policeman, rather than the preeminent warfighting force of a maritime power whose primary goals ought to be deterring — and if necessary, winning — a great-power conflict.

#### A new fleet of ice breakers can’t save the shipbuilding industry – there are too many other barriers.

David J. Lynch 25. Staff writer, MA in international relations from Yale University. "Trump Wants To Build More Ships In The United States. It’s Not So Simple." Washington Post. 3-23-2025. https://archive.ph/5AN2Z#selection-537.0-537.73

President Donald Trump appears set to broaden his attack on global economic integration by imposing new multimillion-dollar fees on the **Chinese container ships** that bring many foreign goods to U.S. shores. The proposed fees are intended to counter what the administration describes — echoing its predecessor — as unfair Chinese trade practices that have given Beijing a chokehold on the construction of commercial vessels. Part of a broader White House strategy to revive U.S. shipbuilding, the levies threaten the system of oceangoing trade that has developed over the past quarter-century — and could result in a repeat of the supply chain disruptions the nation suffered during the pandemic. By charging Chinese-owned or -built vessels each time they dock at a U.S. port, the administration hopes to discourage ocean carriers from buying more ships from China. The U.S. government would spend some of the tens of billions of dollars raised through the fees on subsidizing a commercial **shipbuilding industry** that has fallen into disrepair. Generous **government support**, including tax incentives, would enable revitalized U.S. shipyards to fill orders that now go to facilities in China, South Korea or Japan, according to the administration. U.S. exporters also would be required to meet targets for shipping their goods on U.S.-flagged vessels, rising from almost nothing to 15 percent of the total in seven years. But **maritime specialists** call hopes for a Lazarus-like **revival** of U.S. **shipbuilding unrealistic**, saying it would require **decades** of **consistent** **federal support**. Imposing **hefty fees** on **Chinese** ships now, before American-made alternatives exist, would only raise **freight costs** and **snarl global supply chains**, they said. “It appears to be written by people who have absolutely no idea how the maritime supply chain works,” said Lars Jensen, chief executive of Vespucci Maritime, a consultancy in Copenhagen. “The container lines will adjust and cut out the smaller ports. The consequence is going to be massive port congestion in the larger ports.” The **shipbuilding initiative**, which includes the creation of a new White House office, represents another element in Trump’s frontal assault on trade orthodoxy. Coupled with his plans for the most extensive tariffs in nearly a century, it would reorient global commerce in an “America First” direction. U.S. Trade Representative Jamieson Greer has proposed a complex menu of fees targeting Chinese ships, scheduled to be the subject of a public hearing by his agency on Monday. One levy applies to each port call by a Chinese ocean carrier; a second would be assessed based on the percentage of Chinese-built ships in a carrier’s fleet; a third depends upon the percentage of the carrier’s future orders that have been placed with Chinese shipyards. The measures are needed “to create leverage to obtain the elimination” of Chinese maritime industry dominance, USTR says, suggesting the president may be prepared to negotiate with Beijing. If the new port fees are imposed, the three major ocean carrier alliances, which collaborate like airline industry partnerships, would probably try to avoid the extra costs by reassigning Chinese-made container ships from U.S. routes to serve Europe, analysts said. Some vessels that would be subject to the fees could dock at Canadian or Mexican ports rather than unload at American wharves — costing American dockworkers and truck drivers. Smaller carriers with long-term leases to operate Chinese-made ships could face ruin, said Hans Laue, president of Gisholt Shipping in Weston, Florida. Among those affected would be regional U.S. carriers that ply the waters between South Florida and gulf ports or Caribbean ports such as Jamaica, the Cayman Islands and the Dominican Republic. “They have hundreds, if not **thousands**, of people working in the U.S., and they would be **immediately wiped out**,” he said. Some vessel operators already are trying to cancel contracts with some U.S. ports and delaying negotiations on new agreements “due to the uncertainty of costs associated with trading with the United States,” Brett Bourgeois, executive director of the New Orleans Board of Trade, said in written comments on the USTR proposal. Such upheaval in shipping schedules would have consequences for large and small ports. Container ships normally operate like waterborne buses, making scheduled stops at multiple ports along a coastline. But facing fees that might reach $3.5 million for each stop, they would probably choose to unload all of their cargo in just one place, such as the Port of Los Angeles, executives said. “You are absolutely going to disrupt the U.S. economy. You’ll create covid-like congestion at places like L.A., Long Beach and New York,” said Joe Kramek, president of the World Shipping Council, which represents the major ocean carriers. Fewer vessels docking at smaller ports such as Oakland, California, would make it harder and more expensive for major U.S. exporters to ship their goods to foreign customers, and it would affect imports as well. Farmers who rely on bulk carriers to move grain and other commodities would be hit especially hard, forced to send their crops hundreds of miles overland to Southern California. The proposed fees “will have catastrophic effects on U.S. exports,” Kevin LaGraize Jr., president of Southport Agencies in Metairie, Louisiana, said in written comments submitted to USTR. The fees are just one element in an eight-page draft executive order, titled “Make Shipbuilding Great Again” and obtained by The Washington Post, that the administration is finalizing. U.S. shipyards in recent years typically delivered only a handful of commercial vessels each year, while China built hundreds. The draft executive order cites an “urgent need to reinvigorate the U.S. shipbuilding and maritime industries” and proposes a comprehensive menu of government aid, including the shipping fees and tariffs on Chinese cargo-handling gear. According to a Feb. 27 draft, the president would ask Congress to establish a dedicated funding source for new shipbuilding ventures. “We used to make so many ships. We don’t make them anymore very much, but we’re going to make them very fast, very soon,” Trump said in his address on March 4 to a joint session of Congress. The White House did not respond to a request for comment about the executive order. The focus on shipbuilding has bipartisan support — a group of labor unions filed a petition seeking government help for domestic shipmakers during the Biden administration. In January, just days before President Joe Biden left office, his administration’s USTR endorsed the unions’ complaint, concluding in a 182-page investigative report that the Chinese government had used generous state financing, forced technology transfer, intellectual property theft and discrimination against foreign firms to increase its dominance of global maritime markets. China’s share of global shipbuilding orders rose from less than 5 percent in 1999 to more than 50 percent by 2023, depriving U.S. shipyards of business and creating dangerous “**vulnerabilities** across the U.S. **economy**,” the report said. China’s **shipbuilding supremacy** also has **military implications**. Even as relations with Beijing deteriorated, the U.S. Navy continued to purchase tankers and dry cargo carriers from Chinese shipyards, according to a 2023 Congressional Research Service report. In a speech Tuesday, Vice President JD Vance cited the nation’s shipbuilding decline as an example of deindustrialization that “poses risks both to our national security and our workforce.” Vance contrasted the industry’s performance during World War II, when shipyards turned out “three ships every two days,” with its current annual output of just five ships. “Revitalizing domestic shipbuilding is not only possible but also a priority,” said Michael Wessel, a Washington consultant with ties to the United Steelworkers union. “The principal contributing factor to reduced capacity has been China’s nonmarket pricing of ships. Order books have dried up. We have existing yards that can do more today, and we have facilities that can be brought online.” An **industry revival**, however, faces **numerous hurdles**. U.S. shipyards today have little **presence** in the **commercial market**, concentrating instead on producing **vessels** for the **Navy**. The only significant recent contract won by a U.S. shipyard came in 2022, when Matson, a Hawaii-based carrier, ordered three midsize container ships from the Hanwha Philly Shipyard in Philadelphia. Matson, which serves domestic routes, needs the vessels to comply with the Jones Act, which requires that cargo moving between **two American ports** is carried aboard a **U.S.-built ship.** The protectionist law, dating to 1920, helps explain why **U.S. shipyards** are so **uncompetitive**, analysts said. Matson paid roughly $330 million per ship, while Chinese shipyards offer similar vessels for just $60 million, according to Lloyd’s List, a London-based industry publication. **Trump’s** widespread **imposition** of **import taxes**, including on materials used in shipbuilding such as steel, will only make the domestic industry less competitive in **global markets**, said Rob Willmington, a Lloyd’s List analyst. “China builds what the industry wants,” he said. “You can go to them with your own design, and they’ll do it and do it for 20 percent less than South Korea. What’s missing is the **market** for **U.S. ships**.”

# Robot Tax Bill

## Bill Text

**A Bill to Tax Job Automation**

01 BE IT ENACTED BY THE CONGRESS HERE ASSEMBLED THAT:

02 **SECTION 1.** The United States hereby levies a tax on organizations that adopt automated work

03 processes and establishes a dividend paid out to workers who lose their employment

04 to automation.

04 **SECTION 2. A.** The tax shall apply to all organizations which adopt automation to perform work

05 which is currently performed by a human.

06 **B.** All workers who lose their employment to automation shall be eligible to receive

07 a cost-of-living dividend of the collected tax.

07 **C.** A job retraining program will be established and made freely available to all

08 workers put out of work by automation.

09 **SECTION 3.** A federal oversight body, composed of AI experts, accountants, and policymakers, shall be

10 established to monitor and enforce tax compliance and dividend recipient eligibility.

11 **SECTION 4.** This legislation will take effect on January 1, 2026. All laws in conflict with this legislation

12 are hereby declared null and void.

## Evidence

### Pro

#### Automation will put millions of Americans out of work – only a tax on automation with a dividend paid to workers can offset the economic losses.

Metzger, 2025 (Bryan Metzger – award-winning senior politics reporter at Business Insider covering Congress, campaigns, and money in politics, “Bernie Sanders calls for 'robot tax' to protect workers from the impacts of AI”, *Business Insider*, October 8, https://www.businessinsider.com/bernie-sanders-robot-tax-ai-worker-report-2025-10, shae)

Sen. Bernie Sanders has proposed a possible solution for changes to the labor market driven by AI and automation: a robot tax.

The Vermont senator, who is the ranking member of the Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pensions Committee, released a report this week about how AI will impact the workforce in the coming years.

The report projects that AI could lead to the elimination of 100 million jobs in the United States over the next decade.

"The agricultural revolution unfolded over thousands of years. The industrial revolution took more than a century," the report reads. "Artificial labor could reshape the economy in less than a decade."

Among the various policies proposed in the report to address this disruption is a "robot tax" for large corporations, with the goal of using the revenue raised by that tax to benefit workers who may be harmed by AI.

It's an idea that's been around for a while — and it's not just progressives who are into it.

Bill Gates said in 2017 that automated labor should be taxed just like human labor in order to maintain funding for social safety net programs.

Sanders later wrote in his 2023 book, "It's OK To Be Angry About Capitalism," that he agreed.

"If workers are going to be replaced by robots, as will be the case in many industries, we're going to need to adapt tax and regulatory policies to assure that the change does not simply become an excuse for race-to-the-bottom profiteering by multinational corporations," Sanders wrote in the book.

The report proposes several other policies, including moving toward a 32-hour workweek, allowing greater worker participation on corporate boards, and passing pro-union legislation.

As part of the report, Sanders's staff asked ChatGPT to predict which jobs are most vulnerable to replacement by AI and automation in the next 10 years.

The model found that 89% of fast food and counter workers could lose their jobs, along with 62% of retail salespeople, 54% of software developers, and high percentages of other professions.

"While this basic analysis reflects all the inherent limitations of ChatGPT, it represents one potential future in which corporations decide to aggressively push forward with artificial labor," the report states.

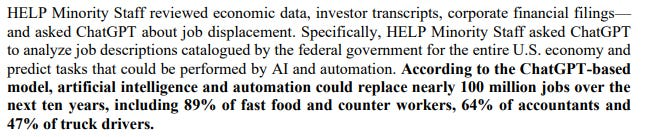
### Con

#### Concerns of job losses through automation are fear mongering – automation changes the nature of work but doesn’t eliminate it.

Pethokoukis, 2025 (James Pethokoukis – Fellow at the American Enterprise Institute, “Bernie Sanders' misguided AI jobs panic”, October 7, https://fasterplease.substack.com/p/bernie-sanders-misguided-ai-jobs, shae)

My fellow pro-growth/progress/abundance Up Wingers,

Senator Bernie Sanders and his Democratic colleagues on the Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions Committee have issued a dire warning: Artificial intelligence could destroy nearly 100 million American jobs within a decade. Yikes! That seems like a lot! Their report, “The Big Tech Oligarchs’ War Against Workers,” claims “AI and automation” will upend the labor market on a simply massive scale.

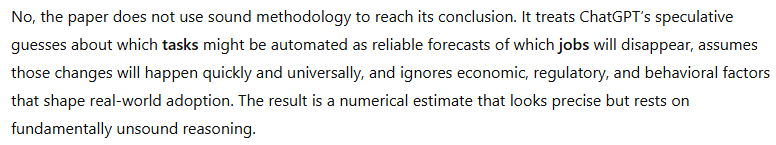


A Great-Techno Depression, you might say. Count me very skeptical, however.

When a chatbot becomes an oracle

For starters, the report’s “analysis” seemingly rests on a gimmick, to be charitable — or a bit of Luddite legerdemain, to be less charitable. Senate Staffers asked ChatGPT which job tasks could be automated in some way, then treated those chatbot answers as evidence that real people will lose real jobs. If AI and other smart machines could, in theory, perform 60-70 percent percent of a job’s tasks — economists typically view a particular job as a bundle of discrete tasks — the authors assumed 60-70 percent of those workers would vanish. The methodology gets fuzzy here, so I could be wrong, but that is my good-faith reading.

That’s also, ironically and hilariously, ChatGPT’s good-faith reading! I uploaded the paper and asked the chatbot whether the report “engages in sound methodology to arrive at its conclusion.” And ChatGPT’s harsh response:



Anyway, automating a specific job task isn’t the same as eliminating a job. More often, automation of any kind changes work, boosts productivity, or spawns new kinds of roles. (Let me also add this bit of context about job market churn: Nearly 2 million jobs are eliminated every month (with typically more created.)

Goldman Sachs, for instance, estimates current AI might automate roughly a quarter of tasks in rich economies — not wipe out 60 percent of workers.

# Space Colonization Bill

## Bill Text

**A Bill to Colonize Space**

01 BE IT ENACTED BY THE CONGRESS HERE ASSEMBLED THAT:

02 **SECTION 1.** The United States hereby creates a program to establish permanent human settlements

03 beyond Earth.

04 **SECTION 2. A.** The National Aeronautics and Space Administration shall be appropriated sufficient

05 funds to research, develop, and launch human-life sustaining habitats in space and on

06 planets other than Earth.

07 **B.** The United States Space Force shall maintain the safety and security of all human

08 settlements beyond Earth.

09 **C**. Contracts with private organizations may be established to complete research, construction,

10 and launch initiatives.

11 **D**. Ownership of all technology and procedures produced through private contracts shall remain

12 under public ownership.

13 **SECTION 3.** The National Aeronautics and Space Administration will work alongside the United States.

14 Space Force to establish best practices and oversee contract negotiations and enforcement.

15 **SECTION 4.** This legislation will take effect on January 1, 2026. All laws in conflict with this legislation

16 are hereby declared null and void.

## Evidence

### Pro

#### Space colonization is necessary to avoid the inevitable extinction of humanity.

Britannica, No Date (“Space Colonization”, https://www.britannica.com/procon/space-colonization-debate#ref393637)

Pro 1: Space colonization can save our species from suffering and extinction.

Elon Musk, founder and CEO of SpaceX, believes “there is a strong humanitarian argument for making life multi-planetary, in order to safeguard the existence of humanity in the event that something catastrophic were to happen, in which case being poor or having a disease would be irrelevant, because humanity would be extinct. It would be like, ‘Good news, the problems of poverty and disease have been solved, but the bad news is there aren’t any humans left.’… I think we have a duty to maintain the light of consciousness, to make sure it continues into the future.” [1]

According to some philosophies, humans are the only beings capable of morality, and, therefore, preserving humanity is the highest moral imperative. Following from that premise, Brian Patrick Green, Director of Technology Ethics at the Markkula Center for Applied Ethics at Santa Clara University, concludes, “Because space settlement gives humankind the opportunity to significantly raise the chances of survival for our species, it is therefore a moral imperative to settle space as quickly as possible.”[21]

Some theorists, including Gonzalo Munevar at Lawrence Technological University, believe colonizing space will increase clean energy on Earth, provide access to the solar system’s resources, and increase knowledge of space and Earth. The benefits to humanity created by the resources and knowledge “create a moral obligation to colonize space.”[22]

Adds Sheri Wells-Jensen, associate professor of English at Bowling Green State University, “We have a moral obligation to improve: that is, to colonize yes, but to do it better: to actively unthink systems of oppression that we know exist. To spread ourselves without thought or care would probably result in failure: more planets spiraling toward global warming or space settlements filled with social unrest.” [23]

#### Space colonization is the inevitable outcome of human development.

Britannica, No Date (“Space Colonization”, https://www.britannica.com/procon/space-colonization-debate#ref393637)

Pro 2: Space colonization is the next logical step in space exploration and human growth.

Fred Kennedy, president of the space transportation company Momentus, a space transportation company, argues that a fundamental truth—repeatedly borne out by history—is that expanding, outwardly-focused civilizations are far less likely to turn on themselves, and far more likely to expend their fecundity on growing habitations, conducting important research and creating wealth for their citizens. A civilization that turns away from discovery and growth stagnates.” Kennedy points out that while humans still have problems to resolve on Earth, “Forgoing opportunities to expand our presence into the cosmos to achieve better outcomes here at home hasn’t eliminated these scourges.” We shouldn’t avoid exploring space based on the false dichotomy of fixing Earthly problems first. [24]

Humans are not a species of stagnation. “The solar system can easily support a trillion humans. And if we had a trillion humans, we would have a thousand Einsteins and a thousand Mozarts and unlimited, for all practical purposes, resources and solar power unlimited for all practical purposes,” says Jeff Bezos, Founder of Amazon.com who traveled to space in 2021, courtesy of his company, Blue Origin. [25]

Space, in particular, is connected to exploration and growth in the human imagination. In 2014 Elon Musk stated, “It’s obvious that space is deeply ingrained in the American psyche…. SpaceX is only 12 years old now. Between now and 2040, the company’s lifespan will have tripled. If we have linear improvement in technology, as opposed to logarithmic, then we should have a significant base on Mars, perhaps with thousands or tens of thousands of people.”[1]

#### Conservation can exist alongside efforts to colonize space.

Britannica, No Date (“Space Colonization”, https://www.britannica.com/procon/space-colonization-debate#ref393637)

Pro 3: Space colonization can exist alongside conservation efforts on Earth.

While Earth is experiencing devastating climate change effects that should be addressed, Earth will be habitable for at least 150 million years, if not over a billion years, based on current predictive models. Humans have time to explore and colonize space at the same time as we mend the effects of climate change on Earth. [26]

“Furthermore, we have to realize that solving Earth’s environmental problems is extremely difficult and so will take a very long time. And we can do this while also pursuing colonization,” says Brian Patrick Green of Santa Clara University. [23]

Jeff Bezos suggested that we move all heavy industry off Earth and then zone Earth for residences and light industry only. Doing so could reverse some of the effects of climate change while colonizing space. [25]

Adds Gonzalo Munevar, interdisciplinary professor emeritus at Lawrence Technological University, “In the shorter term, a strong human presence throughout the solar system will be able to prevent catastrophes on Earth by, for example, deflecting asteroids on a collision course with us. This would also help preserve the rest of terrestrial life — presumably something the critics would approve of. But eventually, we should be able to construct space colonies… [structures in free space rather than on a planet or moon], which could house millions. These colonies would be positioned to construct massive solar power satellites to provide clean power to the Earth, as well as set up industries that on Earth create much environmental damage. Far from messing up environments that exist now, we would be creating them, with extraordinary attention to environmental sustainability.”[23]

As space ecologist Joe Mascaro argues, “To save the Earth, we have to go to Mars.” Mascaro says that expanding technology to go to Mars will help solve problems on Earth: “The challenge of colonising Mars shares remarkable DNA with the challenges we face here on Earth. Living on Mars will require mastery of recycling matter and water, producing food from barren and arid soil, generating carbon-free nuclear and solar energy, building advanced batteries and materials, and extracting and storing carbon from atmospheric carbon dioxide—and doing it all at once. The dreamers, thinkers and explorers who decide to go to Mars will, by necessity, fuel unprecedented lateral innovations [that will help to solve problems on Earth].” [27]

### Con

#### Colonizing space is science fiction – we lack the technological capacity.

Britannica, No Date (“Space Colonization”, https://www.britannica.com/procon/space-colonization-debate#ref393637)

Con 1: Humans living in space is pure science fiction.

Briony Horgan, assistant professor of planetary science at Purdue University, explains that “terraforming” Mars is “way beyond any kind of technology we’re going to have any time soon.” [28]

In one widely promoted plan, Mars needs to first be warmed to closer to Earth’s average temperature—from roughly -76°F/60°C to 59 °F (15 °C), which will take approximately 100 years. Then the planet must be made to produce oxygen so humans and other mammals can breathe, which will take about 100,000 years or more. And those two steps can only be taken once Mars is thoroughly investigated for water, carbon dioxide (CO₂), and nitrates. [29]

A 2018 NASA study concluded that, based on the levels of CO₂ found on Mars, the above plan is not feasible. As explained by lead author Bruce Jakosky, professor of geological sciences at the University of Colorado at Boulder, “terraforming Mars is not possible using present-day technology.” [30]

If a workable solution were found and implemented, a project of that magnitude would cost billions, perhaps trillions, of dollars.

Elon Musk explains that the SpaceX Mars colonization project would need one million people to pay $200,000 each just to move to and colonize Mars, which doesn’t include the costs incurred before humans left Earth. Returning to the Moon would have cost an estimated $104 billion in 2005 (about $170 billion in 2025 dollars), or almost 7 times NASA’s entire 2019 budget. [31][32]

But, a person has yet to set foot on Mars, and no space station has been built on another planet or natural satellite. [32]

Further, as noted by Linda Billings, research professor at George Washington University, “all life on Earth evolved to live in Earth conditions.… If humans can’t figure out how to adapt to, or arrest, changing conditions on Earth—then I can’t see how humans could figure out how to adapt to a totally alien environment.” [23]

#### Colonization incentivizes us to leave Earth in ruins – we must clean up our mess first.

Britannica, No Date (“Space Colonization”, https://www.britannica.com/procon/space-colonization-debate#ref393637)

Con 2: Earth should be cleaned up first before we potentially destroy an extraterrestrial land.

If humans have the technology, knowledge, and ability to transform an uninhabitable planet, moon, or other place in space into an appealing home for humans, then surely we have the technology, knowledge, and ability to fix the problems we’ve created on Earth. [33]

As Lori Marino, founder and executive director of the Kimmela Center for Animal Advocacy, argues “we are not capable of enacting a successful colonization of another planet. The fact that we have destroyed our home planet is prima facie evidence of this assertion. It is sheer hubris to even consider the question of whether we should ‘go or not go’ as if we are deciding which movie to see this weekend because we really are not in a position to make that choice…. What objective person would hire humanity to colonize a virgin planet, given its abysmal past performance in caring for the Earth’s ecosystem (overpopulation, climate change, mass extinctions)?” [23]

Some assert that leaving Earth in shambles proves we are not ready to colonize space in terms of cultural, social, or moral infrastructure, regardless of technological advancements. Even the ongoing space race leaves its trash on Earth. For example, a more than 1,100-pound glowing ring, eight feet in diameter, of metal space junk crashed into a remote Kenyan village according to a January 2, 2025, New York Times article. While that is an especially dramatic example, space junk falls from the sky regularly and causes damage. [44]

“Colonization has the odor of running away from the problems we’ve created here; if we do that, we will simply bring those problems with us. We need a major change in how we think about what it means to be human—we need to stop seeing our species as special and start seeing it as part of a collection of species,” argues John Traphagan, professor of religious studies at the University of Texas at Austin. “In my view, as long as we bring the … [idea] of human exceptionalism with us to other worlds, we are doomed to repeat the same mistakes we have made here.” [23]

#### Life in space would be miserable.

Britannica, No Date (“Space Colonization”, https://www.britannica.com/procon/space-colonization-debate#ref393637)

Con 3: Life in space, even if possible, would be miserable.

As novelist Andy Weir explains, “The problem is that you still don’t want to send humans to the moon. You want to send robots. Humans are soft and squishy and they die. Robots are hard and nobody gets upset when they die.”[34]

Adds bioethicist George Dvorsky, “The Red Planet is a cold, dead place, with an atmosphere about 100 times thinner than Earth’s. The paltry amount of air that does exist on Mars is primarily composed of noxious carbon dioxide, which does little to protect the surface from the Sun’s harmful rays. Air pressure on Mars is very low; at 600 Pascals, it’s only about 0.6 percent that of Earth. You might as well be exposed to the vacuum of space, resulting in a severe form of the bends—including ruptured lungs, dangerously swollen skin and body tissue, and ultimately death. The thin atmosphere also means that heat cannot be retained at the surface. The average temperature on Mars is -81 degrees Fahrenheit (-63 degrees Celsius), with temperatures dropping as low as -195 degrees F (-126 degrees C).”[28]

Meanwhile, lunar dust is made of shards of silica and cuts like glass. The dust that clung to the space suits of Apollo astronauts, scratching their visors and getting in their eyes and throats, could easily result in bronchitis or cancer. And the radiation on the Moon is about 200 times higher than on Earth, in addition to other problems, such as isolation and loneliness, that colonizing the Moon would cause. [35]

Humans would have a host of illnesses to deal with due to climate differences on Mars or the Moon: cancer, radiation illnesses, reproductive problems (or sterility), muscle degeneration, bone loss, skin burns, cardiovascular disease, depression, boredom, an inability to concentrate, high blood pressure, immune disorders, metabolic disorders, visual disorders, balance and sensorimotor problems, structural changes in the brain, nausea, dizziness, weakness, cognitive decline, and altered gene function, among others. Astronauts who have spent just a year in space have demonstrated irreversible health problems. [28][29]

Humans haven’t even attempted to live in Antarctica or under Earth’s seas, which have many fewer challenges for human bodies, so why would humans want to live on a planet or on the Moon that’s likely to kill them fairly quickly? [28]

# Tariffs Removal Bill

## Bill Text

**A Bill to Restrict Tariff Powers to Congress**

01 BE IT ENACTED BY THE CONGRESS HERE ASSEMBLED THAT:

02 **SECTION 1.** The United States hereby eliminates all tariff authority invested in the President of the

03 United States and establishes absolute authority over tariffs to the United States Congress.

04 **SECTION 2. A.** Tariff authority includes any capacity to establish, increase, decrease, or eliminate tariffs

05 on any other nation.

06 **B.** The President of the United States shall have the power of comment and request over

07 tariff provision.

08 **SECTION 3.** The Trade Promotion Authority will oversee implementation and enforcement of all

09 tariff policy established by the United States Congress.

10 **SECTION 4.** This legislation will take effect on January 1, 2026. All laws in conflict with this legislation

11 are hereby declared null and void.

## Evidence

### Pro

#### Presidential authority over tariffs results in chaotic trade policy that devastates economic predictability. Only restricting tariff powers to Congress can resolve unpredictability.

Anderson 18 – executive director of the National Foundation for American Policy, a non-partisan public policy research organization focusing on trade, immigration and related issues, former Executive Associate Commissioner for Policy and Planning and Counselor to the Commissioner at the Immigration and Naturalization Service

(Stuart, 3/5. “Time To Take Away The President's Power To Impose Tariffs.” https://www.forbes.com/sites/stuartanderson/2018/03/05/time-to-take-away-the-presidents-power-to-impose-tariffs/#541ccb2e756a)

The current fiasco and potential economic crisis Donald Trump has created by announcing he would impose tariffs of 25% on steel imports and 10% on aluminum has one root cause – too much power over trade policy vested in a U.S. president.

Would Republicans want President Bernie Sanders to have the authority to raise taxes whenever he wants? If not, then why would they be fine with giving any president the power to impose tariffs on imported goods? After all, every economist knows a tariff is just another name for a tax.

I asked Donald J. Boudreaux, a professor of economics at George Mason University, to evaluate Donald Trump’s understanding of international trade and his qualifications to decide tariff levels for all Americans. “If Trump were a student in my Econ 101 class, an 'F' would be too high a grade,” said Boudreaux. “When it comes to trade, President Trump has the dubious distinction of being unfailingly and spectacularly wrong on every issue, big and small.”

Would Congress allow someone who thinks the moon is the center of the solar system to plan a manned mission to Mars? The crew might end up flying into the sun.

Despite this, over the years, Congress has passed laws that give too much authority over international trade to the president, whoever that president might be. The perils of such laws are now apparent.

Senator Mike Lee (R-UT) has introduced the Global Trade Accountability Act (S. 177), which empowers Congress to approve tariff increases or other “unilateral trade actions.” The bill is simple: “Unilateral trade actions shall require congressional approval,” according to a Congressional summary. Unilateral trade actions are defined as prohibiting the import of an article, imposing an increase in duty or “tightening” a tariff-rate quota or quantitative restriction, or suspending, withdrawing or preventing trade agreement concessions or other restrictions on importing an item.

If the bill were in effect today, then Donald Trump would have to convince members of Congress that imposing tariffs on steel and aluminum were a good idea.

This is important, since we should not assume the current controversy is a one-time event. “The Department of Commerce found that the quantities and circumstances of steel and aluminum imports ‘threaten to impair the national security,’ as defined by Section 232,” according to a Commerce Department press release.

Claims of “national security” and other rationales under U.S. trade law can be employed to restrict imports. Trade lawyer Scott Lincicome notes even the Trump administration’s Department of Defense provided plenty of ammunition to critics (no pun intended) that the national security justification for the steel and aluminum tariffs is questionable. “As noted in both Section 232 reports, however, the U.S. military requirements for steel and aluminum each only represent about three percent of U.S. production,” according to a Department of Defense memo.

Almost every economist in America believes the tariffs would destroy more jobs than they “protect,” will raise prices for U.S. consumers and producers that use steel, and will likely lead to retaliation against U.S. exporters in industries ranging from agriculture to a variety of manufactured goods, including motorcycles.

None of this matters to Trump. He seems to want other countries to retaliate. If other nations respond, “President Trump says the U.S. ‘will simply apply a TAX’ on cars made in Europe if the European Union retaliates to the trade penalties he's seeking on imports of steel and aluminum,” according to the Associated Press.

Trump actually said, “Trade wars are good, and easy to win.” Virtually no one else believes this. But as Paul Waldman wrote recently in the Washington Post, “From where Trump stands, imposing the tariffs is an end in itself.” In other words, persuasion using economic arguments is likely to be futile.

Americans do not elect a dictator, even for one part of U.S. economic policy. Unless Congress acts to restrict the authority of this and future presidents, don’t be surprised if holding Americans hostage to the whims of one man brings unfortunate consequences.

#### Trump’s tariffs are raising prices on Americans and undermining diplomacy with allies and enemies alike.

Gaudiano and Shesgreen, USA Today, 3/8/18

[Nicole, Deirdre, “Sen. Jeff Flake says Congress will try to nix Trump's proposed tariffs”, <https://www.usatoday.com/story/news/politics/2018/03/08/sen-jeff-flake-says-congress-try-nix-trumps-proposed-tariffs/407771002/>, accessed 4/17/18, GNL]

WASHINGTON — Immediately after President Trump unveiled his controversial trade tariffs Thursday, one Republican senator urged Congress to overturn them and another GOP lawmaker blasted the move as a tax hike.

"I will immediately draft and introduce legislation to nullify these tariffs, and I urge my colleagues to pass it before this exercise in protectionism inflicts any more damage on the economy," Sen. Jeff Flake of Arizona tweeted.

Sen. Orrin Hatch, R-Utah, chairman of the Senate Finance Committee, said Trump's action would hurt American businesses and families. “Simply put: This is a tax hike on American manufacturers, workers and consumers,” Hatch said.

Trump signed a 25% tariff on steel imports and 10% on aluminum imports at the White House on Thursday, saying it would revive those industries hurt by unfair trade practices in the global marketplace. The president said some U.S. allies, such as Canada and Mexico, will be exempt as they work with the U.S. to renegotiate the North American Free Trade Agreement.

But those exemptions brought little comfort to concerned Republicans in Congress.

"I don’t think our trade policy ought to be used as a playing card in the talks with both Canada and Mexico on NAFTA," said Sen. Pat Roberts, R-Kansas, before the announcement. "He's exempting our allies, but it’s sort of a pick-and-choose thing. There’s no real stability or predictability."

Flake said even with the exemptions, the tariffs would cause "tremendous damage" to America's diplomatic relationships across the world.

Many Republicans fear Trump's decision will spark a trade war and damage the U.S. economy just eight months before the 2018 elections. House Speaker Paul Ryan, R-Wis., and other GOP leaders had spent the last few days furiously lobbying Trump to scale back the tariffs, an effort that had limited effect.

"I disagree with this action and fear its unintended consequences," Ryan said in a statement Thursday afternoon. He said he was glad Trump included an exemption for Canada and Mexico but said he would press the White House for more changes.

"We will continue to urge the administration to narrow this policy so that it is focused only on those countries and practices that violate trade law," Ryan said.

Before Trump's announcement, Flake said he believed "a number of people" would draft legislation to nullify the tariffs.

Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell, R-Ky., did not offer any hints about whether he would support a move to overturn the tariffs through legislation.

In a statement, McConnell said he was "concerned about the scope" of the tariffs and their impact on the U.S. economy. "Important questions remain about whether ultimately these tariffs will be sufficiently targeted, tailored and limited," McConnell said.

GOP Sen. Ron Johnson of Wisconsin said he is considering backing legislation to require congressional approval for such trade actions. Sen. Mike Lee, R-Utah, introduced the legislation in January 2017 as a response to what Republicans said was executive overreach by President Obama.

"Congress in so many areas has ceded power and authority to the president," said Johnson, who chairs the Senate Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Committee. "We should probably start taking some of that back."

Johnson said he's sending a formal letter to the administration to get a better understanding of their reasoning for Thursday's actions.

"What are their facts?" he asked. "If I have to hold oversight hearings, I'll do that as well."

Asked whether he would back legislation to undo the tariffs, Johnson said: "We'll cross that bridge when we come to it." He questioned whether Democrats would help Republicans block the tariffs.

### Con

#### Congress would do a terrible job with more authority over trade policy – that’s the reason executive power over trade has been increasing

Cost 18 – Ph.D in political science from the University of Chicago, elections analyst, political historian, and a contributing editor at The Weekly Standard. His most recent book is A Republic No More: Big Government and the Rise of American Political Corruption.

(Jay, 3/5. “Congress Handed to the President the Power to Level Tariffs.” https://www.nationalreview.com/2018/03/tariffs-congress-handed-president-power-to-levy/)

After World War II, the United States became one of the world’s superpowers, and trade has been a staple of our foreign policy ever since. This has, naturally, increased the power of the executive branch. It is one of the big reasons that Trump has such vast authority on tariffs. But there is another reason, which illustrates the deep, long-running dysfunction inherent in the legislative branch — a malady so grave that it undermines the republican principles on which the country was built.

The sad truth is that Congress has long been terrible at national economic planning. This was not immediately evident when the Constitution was implemented because, apart from a brief burst of Hamiltonian policymaking in 1790–91, Congress did little to facilitate or regulate the economy. It was only after the debacle of the War of 1812, a conflict that could very easily have resulted in a massive loss of American territory, that Congress decided it had to strengthen the economic foundations of the nation.

The resulting Tariff of 1816 reflected that grand purpose. And it functioned well enough. But subsequent tariffs, in 1824 and especially in 1828, revealed the true scope of the legislature’s problem. The tariff was, in theory, a tool for Congress to promote responsible, balanced economic development that benefited the country as a whole. In practice, it devolved into a regional logroll — protecting goods from the Mid-Atlantic and Midwest while doing virtually nothing for the South, which was becoming increasingly dependent on cotton exports — that especially benefited industrial manufacturers who could influence the course of politics.

Over the course of the 19th century, the tariff became a form of regional hegemony for the North and Midwest over the South and Great Plains. It was also a ready source of funds to bankroll the oligarchic clique that took control over northern politics. The tariff was why the country ran huge budgetary surpluses during the so-called Gilded Age. It was not a sign of frugality in government. It was a sign of rampant corruption.

The Progressives of the early 20th century were reacting in large part against this congressional irresponsibility. That is one reason they called for the direct election of senators, a professional bureaucratic class, and a strong president — these were all ways to diminish the authority of a corrupted Congress that seemed to make the serious problems of industrialization worse.

Conservative Republicans recaptured control of the government in the 1920s, and when the Depression hit, they naturally looked to industrial protection (which had been a staple of GOP politics up to that point). But, as with the experiments with protectionism in the 1820s, this endeavor spiraled out of control, creating a massive logroll that jacked up tariff rates with no rhyme or reason. Herbert Hoover signed the so-called Smoot-Hawley Tariff of 1930 despite grave misgivings. He was right to doubt its merits: Smoot-Hawley worsened the Depression and helped Franklin Roosevelt win a smashing victory.

FDR brought with him to office the old Democratic favoritism toward free trade, but also decidedly Wilsonian views on the relations between president and Congress. He encouraged Congress to transfer authority on trade matters (as well as most regulatory matters!) to him. This time, the legislature agreed. It was as if Congress threw up its hands in exasperation and said to the president, “We cannot handle our authority responsibly. Please take it off our hands, for we will screw things up and lose reelection.”

So more and more over the past 80 years, authority over tariffs, as well as over all manner of properly legislative functions, has migrated to the executive branch, away from the legislative — even in instances (such as this aluminum-and-steel case) where there is no compelling or immediate foreign-policy mandate. Trump’s move is purely a play for aggrieved industrial workers, who should, in the constitutional schema, look to Congress and not the president for redress of their grievances.

And this is exactly the problem with our government in 2018. Nobody looks to Congress for redress of grievances anymore, for it would be foolish to do so! Nobody respects Congress. Nobody likes Congress. Congress, at least to judge from its members’ constant campaigning against it, does not even much like itself. Congress has systematically shrugged power off its shoulders over the past 80 years, and it inevitably screws up the handful of authorities it retains, such as income taxes and “discretionary” spending. The legislature is manifestly incapable of managing the burdens of a modern economy.

In a republic, this is a major problem, because the people are supposed to be sovereign — and it is the legislature that is supposed to represent their interests. But because the legislature cannot represent those interests responsibly, it hands power off to unelected courts or an executive with just two offices out of millions that are popularly elected.

Comments

To be clear, the tariff is not the cause of this dysfunction. Rather, it was the first real indication that congressional irresponsibility was a systemic weakness of our government, and it has come to undermine the republican notion that the people should rule.

This, to me, is more worrisome for republican government than whatever effects, great or small, Trump’s decision on steel and aluminum ultimately generate. It is not just that the president has the power to level tariffs unilaterally. It is not just that Congress handed it over. It is that Congress, the branch of the people, handed it over because it screwed it up, again and again. A republic requires a legislature that can handle such tasks, and we simply do not have one.

# Term Limits Bill

## Bill Text

**A Bill to Establish Congressional Term Limits**

01 BE IT ENACTED BY THE CONGRESS HERE ASSEMBLED THAT:

02 **SECTION 1.** The United States hereby proposes an amendment to the United States Constitution which

03 makes an individual who has served two terms in the Senate ineligible for appointment

04 or election to the Senate and an individual who has served three terms as a Member of

05 the House of Representatives ineligible for election to the House of Representatives.

06 **SECTION 2.** The Congress shall have power to enforce this article by appropriate legislation.

## Evidence

### Pro

#### Congressional term limits are overwhelmingly popular.

Britannica, No Date (“Congressional Term Limits”, https://www.britannica.com/topic/electoral-system)

Pro 1: Americans overwhelmingly support term limits, and that desire should be reflected in our democracy.

According to a March 2023 poll by the Program for Public Consultation (PPC), some 83 percent of registered voters support an amendment for congressional term limits. And the support is overwhelmingly bipartisan: 86 percent of Republicans, 84 percent of Independents, and 80 percent of Democrats. Further, the support has been unwavering since PPC first asked the question in 2017. [8]

Similarly, a September 2023 Pew survey found that 87 percent of adults favored congressional term limits with 56 percent strongly favoring them. [11]

Even in our time of highly contentious, polarizing partisan politics, Americans of all political stripes agree.

What is also clear, given Congress’s failure to pass any term limits bill in over two centuries, is that career members of Congress do not support such limits. As of June 2023, only 112 of the 435 representatives and 21 of 100 senators pledged to support a congressional term limits amendment. That’s well below the 290 representatives and 67 senators needed for a supermajority to pass such limits. Clearly, our representatives will not self-impose limits on their power. Such restraints will have to be imposed on them. [12]

Even congressional members who say they support term limits do not practice what they preach. Senator Ted Cruz (R-TX) sponsored S.J. Res 2 in January 2023, which would limit senate terms to two, the fourth time he’s sponsored such a bill. Meanwhile, Cruz is running for re-election in 2024 for his third term. When asked about the disconnect between his campaign and his support for term limits, Cruz replied, “I’ve never said I’m going to unilaterally comply….I will be more than happy to comply by the same rules that apply for everyone.”[13]

A democracy should reflect the will of the people, not the will of career lawmakers.

#### Term limits make elected representative more responsive to their constituents.

Britannica, No Date (“Congressional Term Limits”, https://www.britannica.com/topic/electoral-system)

Pro 2: Term limits would make representatives more responsive to their constituents.

The Program for Public Consultation (PPC) found in a 2023 poll that 87 percent of registered voters (including 90 percent of Republicans, 88 percent of Independents, and 84 percent of Democrats) agree that “because incumbents are so secure, they don’t need to be attentive to their constituents and increasingly lose touch with the people back home. If we were to have term limits, we would have more open-seat races in which both candidates would really have to earn the votes of the people, including by paying attention to their views.” [8]

Adds Senator Cynthia Lummis (R-WY), who supports term limits: “Too often, Senators and Members of Congress become out of touch with the rest of the country when they find themselves in Washington for too long. Congress was designed to be a body representative of the people, so ensuring we have elected officials who truly understand what it is to work, raise a family and live their lives in their home districts is essential.”[14]

Career members of Congress also tend to be much older than their constituents. The 118th Congress (2023–25) is one of the oldest in American history. The median age for senators is 65 and for representatives it’s 58, and the age of members is steadily increasing. Meanwhile, the median age for Americans is 38.2. [15]

As a result, Representative Dean Phillips (D-MN) called for “generational diversity” in Congress, because “when we have too many members that are around for 30, 40, sometimes 50 years, we are literally precluding participation [of younger citizens]. And I believe the United States is facing a crisis of participation in its politics.” A limitation on terms, he argues, “opens doors for younger generations to become public servants” and “changes the behavior of outgoing members of Congress who feel liberated to vote their conscience and not necessarily their party line.” [15]

“Civic-minded legislators owe it to their constituents, present and future, to create a system that is more inclined and capable of responding to the needs and desires of the population. And voters would be doing themselves and their children a huge favour by demanding greater accountability from their elected officials and supporting efforts to reform our institutions accordingly,” argues Harvard University government lecturer Christopher Rhodes. [16]

#### Term limits prevent career politicians.

Britannica, No Date (“Congressional Term Limits”, https://www.britannica.com/topic/electoral-system)

Pro 3: Term limits would ensure that Congress is composed of people with real-world expertise, not career politicians.

Political writer William Natbony summarized Congress without term limits as a “paradigm of careerism, combining power, stature and influence with lavish benefits: a high salary; unparalleled business connections; limited working days; spectacular working conditions; periodic taxpayer-funded fact-finding trips; a sizable staff (that could include family and friends); exceptional medical, dental and retirement benefits; weakened insider trading rules; taxpayer funded legal expenses; the ability to moonlight at other jobs; free flights back and forth to the lawmaker’s home state; a family death gratuity; and free parking.” [17]

Accordingly, argued the group U.S. Term Limits in 2024, “Washington [D.C.] is run in a top-down structure where seniority equals influence. Even if we vote in better members, they are still buried under the power of [Representative Nancy] Pelosi and [Senator Chuck] Schumer. Term limits would replace seniority with a merit system….As Ronald Reagan said, the only experience you get in politics is how to be political. The problem with Congress is we have too much political experience and not enough from the real world. A physician has a better handle on healthcare policy than a career politician, or a teacher has a better handle on education policy, and so on. Term limits would give people with real world experience the chance to serve and make an impact.” [18]

We cannot simply rely on elections as de facto term limits. When an incumbent member of Congress runs for re-election, they are more likely to win thanks to name recognition and fundraising relationships ready to fill the coffers. In fact, between 1964 and 2022, House incumbents were re-elected 93 percent of the time, while Senate incumbents were re-elected 83 percent of the time. In 2022, 94.5 percent of incumbent representatives and 100 percent of incumbent senators were re-elected. [8][19]

Open elections would give voters more say in the electoral process, more control of our democracy, and a diversity of candidates, not just politicians with name-recognition, a shot at governing.

### Con

#### Term limits create a constant flow of lame-duck politicians.

Britannica, No Date (“Congressional Term Limits”, https://www.britannica.com/topic/electoral-system)

Con 1: Term limits would destabilize the legislative branch.

With term limits, Congress would be perpetually full of lame-duck members, making the legislative branch incredibly ineffective.

During lame-duck sessions, outgoing members of Congress simply ride out the term before a new member replaces them—they are less likely to vote at all, and when they do vote, they are less likely to vote in accordance with the wishes of their constituents or their party. Members are more prone to vote in favor of their next employer’s wishes, and in many cases this employer is a lobbyist or lobbying group. [20]

While the effect of lame-duck sessions is currently small because most members are re-elected, with the imposition of term limits Congress would be in a near permanent lame-duck state, destabilizing the country’s ability to pass legislation at all, much less in line with the wishes of American citizens.

Further, “states that have [legislator] term limits have had faster hyperpartisan polarization because one of the ways in which polarization has accelerated is through turnover in office, that new people who come in tend to be more extreme and more partisan than the people they replace,” notes Lee Drutman, senior fellow at the New America Think Tank. [21][22]

Contributing to the hyperpartisanship is the growing lack of human relationships in Congress. “Bob Dole [Republican representative for eight years and a senator for 27] and Ted Kennedy [Democratic Senator for almost 47 years], they built up a relationship over time. And if you don’t have relationships, it’s very easy to demonize the other person….It’s a lot harder to demonize the other person when you actually know them as a human being. And I worry… in a term limited environment, there’s even less relationship building than there is now, and there’s precious little of it right now,” says Gerald Seib, former executive Washington editor for the Wall Street Journal.[21]

Hyperpartisanship and demonization undercut the probability of bipartisan cooperation that is necessary to get things done in Congress.

#### Experienced members of congress craft better policy and ensure institutional stability.

Britannica, No Date (“Congressional Term Limits”, https://www.britannica.com/topic/electoral-system)

Con 2: Voters and the government both benefit from experienced members in Congress.

Congress is unlike other jobs. Learning the ways laws are written and passed, building the relationships across party lines (and within political factions within parties) that are necessary to propose and pass legislation, and communicating effectively with constituents back home require very specialized knowledge—there’s a large learning curve to all of this. Most first- and second-term members rely on those who have served longer to learn how to navigate the job.

Thus, term limits would spur exactly the opposite of what proponents of such limits want: more inefficient lawmaking. “The workhorses in Congress know the value of having been there for a long time and they know how to make public policy better because of the expertise they have and the care they’ve taken to build relationships with other members,” explains Philip Wallach, a senior fellow at the American Enterprise Institute. [23]

According to the Center for Effective Lawmaking, the representatives who got the most work done (including committee work and sponsoring legislation) in the 117th Congress (2021–23) from each party were Gerald Connolly (D-VA), who is serving his eighth term, and Don Bacon (R-NE), who is serving his fourth. The most effective senators were Gary Peters (D-MI), who is serving his 2nd term, and John Cornyn (R-TX), who is serving his 4th. Of the ten most effective members of each major party and each house (40 members total), 33 have already exceeded term-limit proposals and Peters, the most effective Democratic Senator, would be ousted after his current term expires in 2027. [23][24]

This “brain drain” would mean “fewer experienced policymakers in Congress [which] results in increased influence of special interests that are ready and willing to fill the issue-specific information voids,” says Casey Burgat of George Washington University. [12]

With term limits, not only could lobbyists pounce on members of Congress due to their lack of expertise, they could also entice them with a new job–jobs that are more lucrative and long-lasting–given the members’ limited time in their current positions. As journalist Albert Hunt notes, with term limits, “members of Congress, knowing their time is limited, are easier prey for vested interests….The revolving door would keep revolving.”[25]

#### Elections prevent the need for term limits.

Britannica, No Date (“Congressional Term Limits”, https://www.britannica.com/topic/electoral-system)

Con 3: We already have term limits—they’re called elections.

Looming large in the public imagination are leaders like Senator Strom Thurmond (R-SC) who served for 47 years, 5 months, and 8 days, leaving the Senate at 100 years old as the oldest serving senator to date; Senator Robert C. Byrd (D-WV) who has the longest Senate tenure to date at 51 years, 5 months, 26 days (which excludes his six years as a Representative); and Representative John Dingell, Jr., (D-MI) who served for just over 59 years, spanning presidents Eisenhower to Obama.[26][27]

However, the vast majority of congressional members do not serve such exhaustive terms. The average length of service completed at the opening of the 118th Congress (2023–25) was 8.5 years for representatives and 11.2 years for senators. Many term-limit proposals would limit both houses to 12 years of service, something already accomplished by our electoral system.[28]

Only 23 percent of the current House of Representatives and 43 percent of the Senate have more than 12 years of service. Voters have clearly made their preferences known by not re-electing the majority of representatives and senators for more than 12 years, while keeping those members of congress they find effective.[28]

“Term limits are based on the arrogant assumption that the voters are incapable of deciding who they want to represent them in Congress. Term limits have failed to assure that any elected official is more wise, more honest or more energetic because he is incapable of running for reelection. Logic and experience prove the opposite. Any Congressman who is made ineligible for reelection by term limits feels no restraints upon his behavior, since he will not face the voters again at the next election to answer for his conduct,” explains Idaho’s Save the Constitution Committee.[29]

# Youth Sports Bill

## Bill Text

**A Bill to Publicly Fund Youth Sports to Abolish Pay-for-Play Athletics**

01 BE IT ENACTED BY THE CONGRESS HERE ASSEMBLED THAT:

02 **SECTION 1.** The United States hereby restricts youth sports for children under the age of 13 years to

03 a publicly funded federal program operated by the States. States will be responsible

04 for establishing leagues and financing schemes.

05 **SECTION 2. A.** This bill prohibits any private organization, non-profit or for-profit, from establishing

06 an athletic league, camp, training event, or brand creation and promotion for any

07 athlete under the age of 13 years.

08 **B.** Each State will distribute its federally-acquired funding as needed. No State may

09 discriminate on the basis of race, sex, ability, nationality, ethnicity, or ZIP code.

10 **C.** In the case that these State programs violate federal law, a new program will be created

11 until aligned with federal standards.

12 **SECTION 3.** The Department of Health and Human Services will work alongside states to implement this bill.

13 The Department of Health and Human Services will intervene if it’s observed that there exist any

14 discrepancies in any of the terms listed above.

15 **SECTION 4.** This legislation will take effect on January 1, 2026. All laws in conflict with this legislation

16 are hereby declared null and void.

## Evidence

### Pro

#### The American pay-to-play model of youth athletics is an exploitative system that excludes large portions of the population and inflicts both physical and mental damage on athletes.

Bedrosian, 2025 (Jack Bedrosian – MA in Global Politics from Loyola University Chicago, *Jacobin*, July 30, https://jacobin.com/2025/07/corporate-aau-youth-sports-basketball, shae)

Year-round participation in nationwide competition, brand-sponsored tournaments, invite-only camps, and professionalized personal training has replaced an earlier model of youth sport in which athletes played during the school seasons but enjoyed a long offseason during which they often played another sport for fun.

For the players, the AAU offers exposure, putting not-yet-teenaged kids in front of college coaches, agents, trainers, handlers, and shoe executives. These individuals make up the informal rent-seeking class, which makes money by restricting kid’s access to big-time amateur basketball.

Their primary objective is “relationship building” with future stars, or what sports documentarian Mike Nicoll has referred to as ”juice proximity.” The aim of these individuals is to identify young talent, build up that talent’s brand, and funnel them to a set of specific college programs associated with their particular brand sponsor.

It is perhaps unsurprising that American sports are dominated by the same brand of gatekeeping and rent-seeking capitalism common across the rest of American society. But the AAU exists in what is functionally a sports version of international waters, a decentralized space not run by the government but subject to the whims of major multibillion-dollar shoe corporations like Nike, Adidas, and Under Armour. Within this world, children are viewed as commodities, an asset that could one day be worth hundreds of millions of dollars.

And of course, while there are many well-meaning people in these spaces looking out for the kids and their future earning potentials, the system itself creates perverse incentives that inevitably attract bad actors.

Unsurprisingly, this money-driven, individualized approach to youth basketball is at odds not only with the health of the game but the health of the athletes themselves. Overuse injuries, burnout, and financial stress are all commonplace for both athletes and their families. These realities can be especially painful when the likelihood of getting a D1 scholarship for high school basketball players is less than 1 percent.

On a recent episode of his podcast, The Post Game, former NBA player and seven-time champion Robert Horry put things bluntly:

I hate AAU basketball . . . I hate it, I hate it, I hate it, I hate it. There’s a lot of coaches that are exploiting these kids to try and get a payoff one day . . . I wish they would do something [else], so their bodies won’t get worn down, that’s why you see so many of these kids get hurt so easily now, because they’re overworked.

The justification for this demanding sports environment should be that it produces good results. But in this year’s NBA playoffs and even finals, star players Jayson Tatum and Tyrese Haliburton suffered Achilles ruptures. This is an injury often associated with overuse and previously thought to signal the natural end of a professional athletic career, but it is now being experienced by athletes in their physical prime.

The reality of the AAU experience stands in direct contrast with what experts have come to understand about juvenile athlete development. Findings from Norway’s Children Rights in Sport, as well as the Aspen Institute here in the United States, show that earlier and earlier specialization in sports for children results in increased likelihood of injury and mental health issues.

These stresses often harm promising young careers instead of promoting them. Norway has made efforts to reduce early specialization and has introduced age limits for travel, rejecting the path embraced by America. These commonsense approaches ensure that children are exposed to a sports culture that prioritizes experience and skill development, while protecting the well-being of young athletes.

#### Norway provides an effective model for the nationalization of youth sports in America.

Attention FWD, 2022 (“Making the Game of Life More Fair”, March 31, https://attentionfwd.com/insights/making-the-game-of-life-more-fair/, shae)

Playing sports leads to positive developmental outcomes for socially vulnerable young people. Kids who participate in sports show a long-term increase in prosocial behavior, school performance, physical health and emotional well-being—and have more successful experiences in high school, college and the job market.

These outcomes make sense when sports participation is seen in its broadest social context: playing sports connects kids with coaches, managers, trainers and other adult role models, including the parents of teammates. It gives young people the chance to both be mentored and to become mentors for younger athletes. Teamwork, perseverance and leadership abilities are important for any life endeavor, and the networks and relationships that form among sports teammates often provide support and opportunity later in life.

Unfortunately, the increasing costs and elitism in youth sports have created a barrier for the kids who could benefit most. A recent report from the White House’s Council of Economic Advisers, The Potential for Youth Sports to Improve Childhood Outcomes, describes how youth sports are pricing out entire socioeconomic classes, finding that children in lower income families experience up to an 18 percent participation gap relative to their higher income peers. The high cost of youth sports discriminates along racial lines as well, with white children far more likely to participate in school sports than nonwhite children.

**Equal Opportunity Requires Equal Access**

The problem is clear: youth sports have failed to achieve their potential as a great equalizer and path to opportunity. Instead, they’ve veered into pay-to-play elitism and have become an exclusionary force in society, exacerbating the wealth gap—and the health gap. So what would an ideal version of this broken system look like, and how can we get there?

It starts with the acknowledgement at the national level that access to youth sports is a public good in its own right— not just a subset of education, and not just a subset of health care.

1 in 6 kids under 18 live in poverty

**Nationalize Youth Sports**

One possible approach: nationalize youth sports. Norway’s youth sports system is the envy of the world. A $33 million subsidy program makes sure no Norwegian kids miss out on sports because their families can’t afford it. Adjusted for population size, that would be a $2 billion fund in the US. All 54 of Norway’s youth sports federations are signatories to the national “Children’s Rights in Sport” charter, which gives kids a say in how they train and compete, and forbids the creation of elite divisions or travel teams before kids turn 13. The results of this approach include participation rates above 90 percent and an off-the-charts per-capita Olympic medal count.

While Norway’s system appears to be a utopian situation, it’s almost certainly not America’s utopian future. There are several reasons Norway’s approach would face steep odds against adoption in the US. First, Norway’s population is roughly the size of Colorado’s, which, even given enough funding, would make central administration of a nationwide program exponentially more complex. Perhaps even more significantly, the incumbent for-profit youth sports programs that were making money hand over fist before the pandemic are not going to hand the reins to government overseers without a fight. Finally, Americans tend to be culturally allergic to anything that can be portrayed as “socialized.”

The way forward is most likely a private-public hybrid that harnesses the energy of youth sports entrepreneurs and fuels their efforts with funding from the government and the sports industry. And as bleak as the current situation may seem, a handful of seeds may be taking root that could grow into a sports ecosystem that provides opportunity fairly to kids everywhere.

600,000 Kids Served by UP2US community sports programs

**The Future Is Already Here Dep’t**

In 2008, Teach for America instructor Simon Cataldo handed lacrosse sticks to 11 of his students, kicking off the first lacrosse program at Harlem’s Frederick Douglass Academy. At the end of the school year, those students posted historically high scores in a statewide math test. Cataldo’s initiative blossomed into the formation of Harlem Lacrosse in 2011, a holistic youth services program focusing on building positive relationships and life skills for kids identified as most at risk to drop out of school. Today, Harlem Lacrosse has active chapters in five cities, with more than 1,300 kids participating. To date, the program’s graduates have gone on to attend dozens of the most prestigious prep schools in the US and have earned more than $40 million in college scholarships from the nation’s top colleges.

While Harlem Lacrosse is a great example of compassion, ingenuity and focused organizational effort combining to generate opportunity for several thousand young people, roughly 12 million youth under the age of 18 live in poverty. To even the playing field for all of those kids, we need system-wide changes.

**Game-planning for a School Sports Comeback**

The Aspen Institute’s Project Play initiative is using a combination of research, partnerships, sponsorships and media exposure to spur increased participation and emphasize diversity and inclusion in youth sports nationwide. Project Play’s #DontRetireKid ad campaign, championed by Kobe Bryant, sought to stem the trend of kids dropping out of sports altogether at increasingly early ages. Project Play’s Reimagining School Sports in America project awards grants to schools designing innovative and inclusive approaches to high school sports. The grade school version of the program, called the Great Middle School Sports Search, publishes an annual best-practices guide spotlighting ingenuity in providing kids with sports opportunities among resource-challenged schools across the country.

And, fortunately, someone inside the federal government has been paying attention. In 2019, the US Department of Health and Human Services developed and published a National Youth Sports Strategy built around a stated vision “that one day all youth will have the opportunity, motivation, and access to play sports, regardless of their race, ethnicity, sex, ability, or ZIP code.” The document, drawing on research from the Aspen Institute and others, is, as billed, a strategy outline rather than a plan with specifics. But it lays out an admirable set of recommendations and guideposts for decision makers at all levels of government, private industry and communities.

The closest thing to a truly national youth sports equality effort exists in the form of Up2Us Sports, a nonprofit funded primarily through AmeriCorps, the national service program that started in 1994 as a stateside Peace Corps. Over the last decade, nearly 5,000 coaches in Up2Us’s “Coach Across America” program provided sports programs for more than 600,000 kids in underserved communities.

**Utopia 2035**

The bipartisan CORPS Act, introduced in June 2020 as part of the COVID-19 relief effort and signed into law in early 2022, pumped more than $16 billion into the annual AmeriCorps budget, more than tripling the headcount of the organization and allowing the Coach Across America program to expand to serve millions of underprivileged kids a year. Community-based rec leagues flourished with the new resources, with local businesses and national brands matching AmeriCorps funding. Youth sports participation soared. Relieved parents pulled their kids out of expensive, time-intensive travel programs. Many travel clubs folded, but the more nimble among them stopped marketing to families of grade school kids and created partnerships with rec leagues and need-based scholarship programs to develop the emergent bumper crop of highly talented, motivated high-school-age kids whose economic situations would have prevented them from finding their potential in pre-COVID times. Much of the social stability that has developed in the US over the last 15 years is attributed to the early 2020s’ about-face in youth sports, which brought together families from all across the cultural and socioeconomic spectrum and united them over a shared passion: watching their kids have fun, compete and learn important life lessons.

**Dystopia 2035**

Public funding for youth sports all but dried up following COVID-19, decimating rec sports programs. School districts refocused their strained resources on retrofitting their operations to deliver remote education. Some elite travel programs survived the pandemic, but the disruption of two years of sports seasons and routines, coupled with COVID-related culture-wide doubts about the value of traditional college education, undercut interest in team sports, decimating participation across all levels of society. The national social fabric, badly damaged in the tumultuous 2020 presidential election and its aftermath, remains in tatters to this day.

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#### Even if the cost of youth athletics is high, those costs are increasingly covered by professional sports teams, private equity and investment firms, and athletic-wear companies.

Berkida Ventures, 2025 (Berkida Ventures is an investment and advisory firm focused on youth sports, media, and entertainment, “Youth Sports: The Downstream Investment That’s Growing Up Fast”, July 3, https://theberkidabrief.substack.com/p/youth-sports-the-downstream-investment, shae)

Youth sports have become investable. Private equity, top clubs, and family offices are now treating it as a global $70B opportunity, driven by brand equity, IP, and long-tail monetisation that starts as early as age 6.

Paris Saint-Germain is reportedly investing up to $70M on a residential academy in Florida. Juventus operates over 80 academies worldwide. Why? Because it is no longer just about talent. It is about owning the journey, building brand equity early, and turning 12-year-olds into lifelong fans.

The capital markets have taken note. Josh Harris and David Blitzer’s Unrivaled Sports raised $120M last month to consolidate the fragmented U.S. youth sports space. Dick’s Sporting Goods co-led the round. Private equity, venture capital, and retail giants are all making strategic moves.

Cities are moving fast too. Lubbock, Texas just greenlit an $8M expansion to its youth sports complex to attract more tournaments and tourism. In Ocoee, Florida, officials approved a $1 billion project to build “The Dynasty,” a 159-acre youth sports mega-complex with 17 convertible fields and a 150,000 sq. ft. indoor facility.

Even veteran investors in pro sports are leaning into youth. Brett Johnson, co‑owner of Ipswich Town FC and Chairman of Rhode Island FC, recently said on the Sport Businessman Podcast that youth sports are “largely uncorrelated with the broader economy” and “recession-proof” because families tend to cut back on other expenses before discontinuing their kids’ sports participation.

#### Publicly-run youth athletics get bogged down with bureaucratic barriers that drive out participation while maintaining unequal competition among athletes.

Gelman, 2025 (Andrew Gelman – Professor of Statistics and Political Science @ Columbia University, “Those youth sports travel teams”, March 12, https://statmodeling.stat.columbia.edu/2025/03/12/those-youth-sports-travel-teams/, shae)

I was on the Freaknomics page and . . . they’re not all bad—they have lots of good stuff too! Here’s a transcript of a podcast about Little League:

Youth baseball — long a widely accessible American pastime — has become overrun by $10,000-per-year for-profit travel leagues. Zachary Crockett peers inside the dugout.

They have some history, some stories, some economics . . . it’s all worth reading. The theme is that volunteer parent-coached Little League is being superseded by private travel leagues which are competitive, expensive, and time-consuming.

I also wanted to share some stories from my personal experience as a youth sports coach.

Here in New York we were involved for several years with West Side Soccer League and West Side Little League. The soccer league was much better than the baseball league, but both faced competition from travel teams.

West Side Soccer League is a lot of fun. Part of this is the nature of soccer itself: just in the course of the game, every player gets approximately the same amount of contact with the ball (excepting those little kids who are afraid of the ball, but that’s part of coaching, to make sure they get into the play and don’t just keep backing away), and we arrange substitutions so that all players get the same playing time. One issue that arises is motivation: at the younger ages, there are a lot of kids who aren’t sure they want to be there, they show up late to practice and dog it during the games. Meanwhile, there are some other little kids who are dominant, and it’s hard to train the kids to defend against that. Once you get to age 12 or so, most of the unmotivated kids stop coming, and most of the best players are in travel teams, so you get a good level of parity on the field. Also, the WSSL organizers are really good, and they work to balance the teams each year. West Side Soccer League also has travel teams and tournament teams (an intermediate level where they play a couple tournaments a year), but this falls apart around age 12 or so because they were getting slaughtered by the more serious travel teams from the suburbs. Anyway, I like their regular rec league: even through high school the kids have competitive but fun games and play hard without it taking too much of their, oor their parents’, times.

One annoying issue that keeps coming up with West Side Soccer League is paperwork. If you want to coach, you need to go through a security check and do some required training. I have no complaints there—I can see the benefits of requiring a security check, and the training was helpful, even if not all the coaches follow the instructions. One piece of advice I remember is that you should be teaching skills, not strategy. Spend less time telling the kids where on the field they should be playing (except for the issue mentioned above, of making sure they play actively) and more time giving them practice kicking and moving with the ball. During the game, the main thing is to keep them running around. Don’t worry if they do stupid things like pass the ball in front of their own goal; they’ll learn from their mistakes. The goal is for them to have fun and develop their skills. Anyway, the point is that I appreciated the coaching training. But every couple of years they’d bug us with some new required bit of training. Similarly with the referees. Every week they’d send us emails saying they needed more volunteer refs to show up to the games, but then often they wouldn’t allow someone to schedule as ref because he or she hadn’t checked the right box somewhere and wasn’t eligible . . . The parent-run league is great, and I really appreciate the efforts of the commissioners who do all the organizing. And I can see the appeal of paying a bit for professionals to do it so that we don’t have to. The latest bit of paperwork is some official city requirement that someone at every game has to be trained to use the defibrillator . . . Every new regulation makes it more of a pain to continue. The issue here is not “helicopter parents” or whatever; it’s the mountain of paperwork.

West Side Little League was another story. The baseball was fun, and it’s all parent-run except that for some reason they pay for umpires, but the culture of baseball is just much less egalitarian than with soccer. To start with, the positions are unequal. Especially at the younger ages, the ball rarely goes into the outfield—just about every plate appearance is a walk, a strikeout, or a ball in the infield—and the coaches do not move the players around to different positions. Even beyond positioning, the kids don’t get anything like equal playing time. The coaches don’t even pretend to keep balance here. And they’d also put the best hitters first in the lineup, every time, which, yeah, sure, it’s baseball, but, again, in youth soccer we move kids around and try to give everyone an equal chance. In WSLL they’d keep the worst players on the bench as long as they can and otherwise stick them in the outfield. If this were soccer, they’d rotate all the players through the infield and let most of them pitch. . . . Oh yeah, they have pitch-count rules (for little kids, no more than 50 pitches in the game) which coaches routinely violate. As for the coaching . . . sometimes it’s fine, often not. Many times we had coaches who would spend almost all their time screaming at their own kids. I was never an official coach but sometimes I did the job when the official coaches didn’t show up. Everyone was volunteering so I can’t complain; let me just say that it never went that way in West Side Soccer League. And there’d be problems with some of the kids. I remember one player who had no confidence at the plate. He would just about never swing at the ball. He’d just stand there and hope for a walk. Which, yeah, when it’s 10-year-olds pitching this can be a legit Moneyball-style strategy, but . . . jeez, if you’re gonna be playing baseball, you should swing the bat! If you’ve never gonna swing at the plate, and then on defense you’re standing in the outfield and never seeing the ball, then why show up to the game at all? Really, what’s the point? But the coaches would just let this kid do this, game after game, year after year, to the point that the umpires would start getting annoyed and calling just about every pitch to him as a strike.

The point of all this is that, when it comes to youth baseball, I can see the appeal of a professionally-coached team. It’s not about wanting your kid to be a superstar, it’s just about having something that’s fun and well organized, a game that starts on time where the kids get some coaching and where they’re treated with a bit of respect. We got this in West Side Soccer League but not in West Side Little League.

A bit of googling turned up this related article by political commenter Matthew Yglesias, “High-pressure youth sports is bad for America.” I agree with Yglesias’s main point, that “high-stakes, high-pressure youth sports” is outta control, but I disagree with his claim that, “There’s a youth sports industry that benefits from affluent parents’ participation, and the parents themselves are stuck in a collective action problem where nobody wants to be the family that opts out,” and his solution, that “Everyone needs to act more normal.” In many cases, sure, parents and kids should “just chill out.” But I think that framing this as a collective action problem misses the more very direct issues that (a) a volunteer league can be run badly (that’s my experience with West Side Little League), and (b) there can be real obstacles to volunteering in a youth league (that’s my experience with West Side Soccer League, even though in that case I was willing to do the work). I like volunteer leagues, but I can see the appeal of paying for a professionally-run league, not because of any illusion of sporting excellence but just to make it easier for the kids to get out there and play.