

One Hundred Eighteenth Congress

Jan. 3, 2023-Jan. 3, 2025

Administration of Joseph R. Biden Jr.

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Historical Background

Leading up to the 2024 elections, the 118th congress started with a fiercely divided House and Senate

The House struggled to elect a Speaker at the beginning of the session, voting began on January 3rd with Kevin McCarthy as the Republican nominee, however he was unable to get the 218 votes needed to secure the position. Democrats easily voted in Hakeem Jeffries as the minority leader, with 212 votes on January 3rd. Voting for a Speaker resumed on the 4th, however 19 republicans remained hold outs, preferring a more conservative nominee, nominating Jim Jordan as an alternative to McCarthy. Voting lasted 5 days and on January 7th Kevin McCarthy finally received enough votes and was elected speaker at 12:37am on the 15th vote.

On October 3rd, Representative Matt Gaetz of Florida, filed a successful motion to vacate the speakership of Kevin McCarthy. Patrick McHenry of North became Speaker Pro Tempore until a new Speaker could be elected. Three weeks later, after failed attempts at the position by Jim Jordan and Tom Emmer, Mike Johnson of Louisiana was elected to the position with 220 votes.

War or Peace?

Israel/Gaza Conflict

On October 7, 2023, Hamas-led militants from the Gaza Strip initiated a surprise attack on Israel killing more than 1,200 and taking hostage around



President
Joseph R. Biden Jr.

House	Senate
Majority Party: Republican (222 seats)	Majority Party: Democrat (48 seats)
Minority Party: Democrat (213 seats)	Minority Party: Republican (49 seats)
Other Parties: 1 vacant seats	Other Parties: Independent (3 seats)
Speaker of the House: Kevin McCarthy	Majority Leader: Charles Schumer
Mike Johnson	

240 Israelis and foreign nationals. Israel then formally declared war on Hamas and launched aerial and ground assaults in Gaza. A pause in the fighting in late November 2023, led to 250 Palestinian prisoners released and 110 Israeli captives let go. As of early December 2023, more than 18,200 Palestinians have been killed and, according to the U.N., more than 1.9 million Gazans were displaced because of the current conflict. Responses to the conflict differed in the international community, with U.S. President Biden's administration largely supporting Israel while many Arab nations demanding a ceasefire. President Biden backed Israel's strategy of ending Hamas's control of Gaza arguing that Israel had the right to protect its citizens from acts of terrorism but urged Israel to be more strategic in their approach to the engagement with Hamas and that Palestinians should not be forcibly relocated. He advocated for peace in Gaza and support of the two-state solution. President Biden sought defense and humanitarian funding for Israel from Congress with several bills brought forward but lawmakers in both houses differed in how to allocate aid to Israel.

Russian Invasion of Ukraine

In October 2021, reports of Russian military movements on the Ukrainian border raised alarm among defense analysts and Ukrainian, US, and EU leaders that Russia was preparing to invade Ukraine. Such an invasion would come nearly eight years after Russia invaded and annexed Ukraine's Crimea region and occupied the Donbas region. In March and April of 2021, similar Russian troop buildups took place, but the October movements coincided with more aggressive rhetoric by Russian leaders and was followed-up by a cyberattack and attempted sabotage attributed to Russia. Subsequent bilateral negotiations between Russia and the US, Russia and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, and Russia and the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe have been unsuccessful. Russia demanded "security guarantees" including military drawdown of NATO forces from Eastern Europe.

Nagorno- Karabakh Conflict

The long standing territorial dispute between Armenia and Azerbaijan, centering around the Nagorno-Karabakh region, intensified in 2023. Following the escalation of the conflict in 2020 and the subsequent armistice granting Azerbaijan control over the formerly occupied territories and a portion of Nagorno-Karabakh the conflict hit a flash point in September of 2023. Azerbaijani forces launched a large scale attack on the Artsakh region. One day after the initial offensive after an estimated 100,000 Armenians fled the region, a ceasefire agreement was negotiated by Russian peace-keeping forces resulting in the surrender of Artsakh authorities and the planned dissolution of the state by the beginning of 2024.

Sources:



Speaker of the House
Mike Johnson



Senate Majority Leader
Charles Schumer

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Economic Trends and Conditions

In 2023 a global banking crisis began with four American regional banks, notably Silicon Valley Bank and First Republic Bank, failing after facing significant challenges. The bank failures fueled fears of broader risks to the banking sector, specifically in the form of continued runs on customer deposits. Among other actions, the Fed responded by creating a new Bank Term Funding Program, meant to safeguard bank institutions from market instability brought on by the failures.

The persisting inflation, carried over from 2021, combined with low unemployment rates prompted the Federal Reserve to continue raising interest rates, bringing the target interest rate to the highest of the last 20 years intentionally slowing the economy to fight soaring inflation increasing risks of a looming recession. Central banks worldwide showing similar economic headwinds and high inflation have raised concerns about economic crises across global markets. Chinas stagnant growth surfacing crises in real estate furthered concerns on global economic outlooks as China historically was the largest growing economy in the world and is deeply intertwined with other markets due to supply and demand. The proliferation of artificial intelligence and large language models spurred significant regulatory, economic and ethical questions throughout numerous industries. The Writers Guild of America joined the ongoing SAG-AFTRA strike, creating a “double strike” that paralyzed the industry for months. This strike was part of a broader trend of increased labor strikes nationwide including United Postal Service and United Auto Workers.

The summer and fall of 2023 witnessed substantial mergers and acquisitions, including ExxonMobil’s nearly \$60 billion purchase of pioneer Natural Resources and Chevron’s \$50 billion acquisition of Hess Corporation in the oil and gas sector, pending regulatory approval.

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Major Treaties

High Seas Treaty, also known as the agreement on Biodiversity Beyond Natural Jurisdictions. The United States joined more than 70 other countries on September 20th signing the High Seas Treaty providing for common governance of high seas which make up 95% of the oceans volume and half of the earths surface. The treaty is designed to promote equity and fairness, tackle environmental degradation, fight climate change, and prevent biodiversity loss in the high seas.

Landmark U.S. Supreme Court Decisions

Students for Fair Admissions, Inc. v. President and Fellows of Harvard College, held that race-conscious admissions policies at both the private university of Harvard and public university of University of North Carolina were unlawful, 600 US _ (2023)

Biden v. Nebraska, ruled that the Biden administrations plan to wipe out student loan debt totaling more that \$400 billion overstepped its authority and was not authorized by congress, 600 US _ (2023)

Twitter, Inc. v. Taamneh, concluded that internet platforms may not be sued for aiding and abetting international terrorism by hosting content that is posted by others, specifically failing to remove videos supporting the Islamic State, 598 US _ (2023)

Allen v. Milligan, that Alabama had illegally diluted the power of Black voters by drawing a congressional voting map with a single district in which they made up a majority, 599 US _ (2023)

Moore v. Harper, concluded that state legislatures can not have unchecked oversight over regulating federal elections and instead the language in the constitution gives state courts the ability to exercise oversight , 600 US _ (2023)

2023 Events

- **Jan. 1:** Leftist, Luiz Inacio “Lula” de Silva, is sworn in for a historic third term in a deeply polarized Brazil following his far-right predecessor Jair Bolsonaro.
- **Jan. 5:** Pope Benedict XVI’s funeral is held at the Vatican in Saint Peters Square
- **Jan. 6:** China opens its borders for the first time since 2020 to international visitors following the easing of covid related travel restrictions
- **Jan. 7:** Kevin McCarthy is sworn in as the Speaker of the House after 15 ballots, the most rounds of voting in 163 years.
- **Jan. 8:** Supporters of former Brazilian President, Jair Bolsonaro, refusing to accept his defeat, storm Congress, the High Court and Presidential Palace in the capital city of Brasilia
- **Jan. 16:** As part of the ongoing conflict between Ethiopia and the Tigray Peoples Liberation Front, the Anharan special forces withdraw from the Tigray region
- **Jan. 18:** Denys Monastyrsky, Ukrainian Minister of Internal Affairs, is killed along with 13 others in a helicopter crash outside of Kiev, Ukraine
- **Jan. 19:** New Zeland Prime Minister, Jacinda Arden, announces her resignation, citing the reason as burnout
- **Jan. 27:** The UN condemns violence and Israeli killings of Palestinians in the Jenin Refugee Camp in the West Bank after a Jan. 26 raid into the camp lead by Israeli forces killing 9 and injuring over 20. Later in the day 7 Israelis are killed by a Palestinian gunman in an attack at the synagogue in Neve Yaakov.
- **Jan. 30:** A suicide bombing in a mosque in Peshawar, Pakistan kills 84 people and injures over 220
- **Feb.1:** The Lebanese pound is devalued by 90% by the central bank of Lebanon as the country grapples with an ongoing financial crisis.
- **Feb. 2:** Israel and Sudan finalize an agreement to normalize relations after years of normalization efforts, plans are made to sign the agreement in Washington DC later in the year.
- **Feb. 3:** Chinese spy balloons are spotted and shot down over the United States
- **Feb. 3:** Hazardous materials being transported by a Norfolk Southern train are spilled when the train derails in East Palestine, Ohio, train cars burn for days releasing phosgene and hydrogen chloride into the air
- **Feb. 6:** A 7.7 magnitude earthquake hits parts of Turkey and Syria causing over 55,000 deaths and 100,000 injuries
- **Feb. 14:** Nikki Haley announces she is running for President, the first to challenge Donald Trump, her former boss

- **Feb. 20:** President Joe Biden makes a surprise trip to Kyiv, Ukraine, vowing unwavering support for the country in its war against Russia
- **Feb. 26:** After a Palestinian gunman kills two Israelis in the northern West Bank, violence erupts in the area as mobs of West Bank Israeli citizens burn 200 buildings and kill at least one person
- **Mar. 1:** Bola Tinubu, Leader of the All Progressives Congress party, is declared the winner of Nigeria's Presidential election amid claims by opposition parties of fraud
- **Mar. 4:** U.S. Department of Defense documents from the war in Ukraine are leaked online on the Discord platform
- **Mar. 7:** massive nationwide demonstrations bring France to a halt as people protest the governments plans to raise the pension age from 62 to 64
- **Mar. 10:** Silicon Valley Bank, a main bank for tech-start ups, fails after a sudden credit crisis and bank run
- **Mar. 10:** Chinese President, Xi Jinping, is appointed to a historic third term, despite the previous restriction on the position to only two terms
- **Mar. 12:** massive protest erupt in Israel in response to Prime Minister, Benjamin Netanyahu, plans to overhaul the judicial system
- **Mar. 14:** The US accuses Russia of forcing down its large MQ-9 Reaper drone over the black sea after it collides with a Russian fighter jet
- **Mar. 16:** Despite large nationwide protests, President Emmanuel Macron of France, uses special powers to force through his pension reform plan raising the retirement age to 64
- **Apr. 12:** The EPA, proposes a sweeping set of regulations on pollution to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, proposing to make 67% of all new car sales electric vehicles by 2032
- **Apr. 13:** The FBI arrests a Massachusetts 21 year old man for leaking classified documents on discord earlier in the year, it is revealed the man is a member of the Air National Guard
- **Apr. 16:** Violence erupts in Khartoum, Sudan, as fighting between warring military powers intensifies killing at least 83 people and injuring over 1,000
- **Apr. 18:** The lawsuit between Fox News and Dominion Voting Systems is settled with Fox news admitting it defamed the voting systems company by broadcasting conspiracy theories during the 2020 election, it pays \$787.5 million in damages
- **Apr. 21:** The Supreme Court overrules the ban from a Texas District Court Judge, ruling the abortion pill, mifepristone, should remain available
- **Apr. 22:** After over 400 people are killed and at least 200,000 people have fled from violence in the Sudanese Capital of Khartoum, Foreign countries evacuate their civilians from the country

- **Apr. 34:** India officially surpasses China as the most populous country in the world
- **Apr. 26:** President Joe Biden announces he will seek reelection in the 2024 presidential election
- **Apr. 27:** former Vice President, Mike Pence, testifies at the grand jury investigation of his former boss, President Donald Trump and his possible attempt to overturn the 2020 election
- **May 2:** The Writers Guild of America strike begins, halting work for many in the industry
- **May 4:** The World Health Organization removes the global health emergency for Covid-19
- **May 6:** King Charles III and Queen Camilla are coronated at Westminster Abbey in London
- **May 9:** Former President, Donald Trump, is found guilty in the case of sexual abuse of E. Jean Carroll and is ordered to pay \$5 million for battery and defamation
- **May 10:** Beyonce begins her Renaissance World Tour.
- **May 21:** Scientists obtain rocks from the Earth's mantle by drilling into the ocean floor.
- **June 3:** The Fiscal Responsibility Act of 2023 which raises the U.S. debt ceiling is passed and signed into law.
- **June 6:** New York City proclaimed worst city in the world for air pollution due to Canadian wildfire smoke.
- **June 8:** The US Supreme Court rules that Alabama will have to redraw its congressional districts map due to racial discrimination.
- **June 14:** Scientists in U.S. and U.K. create first synthetic human embryo.
- **June 23:** Yevgeny Prigozhin and his mercenary force, the Wagner Group, stage a rebellion against Russian military.
- **June 29:** US Supreme Court rules against affirmative action in college and universities admission decisions.
- **June 30:** US Supreme Court rules that President Biden cannot implement federal student loan forgiveness for millions of federal student loan borrowers.
- **July 14:** Screen Actors Guild-American Federation of Television and Radio Artists (SAG-AFTRA) announces strike against film and television studios over low pay and artificial intelligence concerns.
- **July 21:** Barbenheimer: Barbie and Oppenheimer, two vastly different movies, are released the same day with most audiences planning to see both, creating a cultural phenomenon.
- **July 21:** Lionel Messi starts playing for Inter Miami soccer club.
- **August 4:** FDA approves of an oral postpartum depression pill.
- **August 8:** Deadly wildfires spread through Maui raising the town of Lahaina and killing around 100 people.

- **August 18:** South Korea, Japan, and the U.S. enter a trilateral pact to protect against potential nuclear threats in the Indo-Pacific area.
- **August 20:** Spain's women's soccer team wins their first world cup.
- **August 23:** India becomes the fourth country to land on the moon by an unmanned lunar vehicle.
- **August 10:** Richard Branson's commercial spaceflight company, Virgin Galactic, successfully flies initial group of tourists.
- **Sept. 9:** Coco Gauff wins her first US Open major.
- **Sept. 10:** Storm Daniel, a massive tropical cyclone in the Mediterranean, causes flooding in the area and massive casualties in Libya.
- **Oct. 3:** Kevin McCarthy is voted out as Speaker of the House by fellow Republicans after passing legislation to avoid a U.S. government shutdown.
- **Oct. 7:** Hamas-led militants surprise attacks Israel resulting in months-long conflict.
- **Nov. 1:** The UK hosts the first global conference on artificial intelligence to discuss regulation of AI.
- **Nov. 7:** NASA researchers discover oldest supermassive black hole in the universe ever recorded.
- **Nov. 14-17:** Xi Jinping, China's president, meets for a summit with U.S. president, Joe Biden, in San Francisco, U.S.
- **Nov. 22:** Ousted CEO of OpenAI, Sam Altman, returns as the position as result of employee revolt.
- **Dec. 1:** Sandra Day O'Conner, the first woman to serve as a U.S. Supreme Court justice, passes away.
- **Dec. 6:** Taylor Swift named Time Person of the Year due to her best-selling tour and economic impact.

2024 Events

- **Jan. 2:** Following Congressional hearings on antisemitism on college campuses and ongoing plagiarism accusations, Harvard president Claudine Gay resigns.
- **Jan. 5:** An emergency exit door on a Boeing 737 MAX airplane blows out mid-flight forcing an emergency landing and prompting a large scale review of the model and Boeing.
- **Jan. 10:** Chris Christie suspends his 2024 presidential campaign.
- **Jan. 12:** A strike against Houthi militants is launched in Yemen by a U.S. led coalition.
- **Jan. 21:** Ron DeSantis suspends his 2024 presidential campaign.

- **Jan. 24:** TX Gov. Greg Abbott declares that Texas would refuse to allow federal authorities to access Shelby Park, escalating the Standoff at Eagle Pass.
- **Jan. 26:** The jury in *E. Jean Carroll v. Donald J. Trump* finds the defendant guilty of defamation and awards the plaintiff \$83.3 million.
- **Feb. 7:** Marianne Williamson suspends his 2024 presidential campaign.

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Major Acts

Fiscal Responsibility Act of 2023. Increased the federal debt limit and set new discretionary spending caps while rescinding unobligated funds. The Act also expanded work requirements for federal programs and modified aspects of the federal budget process. ([137 Stat. 10, PL118-5](#))

Emergency Supplemental Appropriations, Fiscal Year 2024, Protecting Americans' Data from Foreign Adversaries Act. Prohibits data brokers from selling, licensing or transferring personally identifiable sensitive data of U.S. individuals to foreign adversary countries. ([138 Stat. 895, PL118-50](#))