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Cahill on the Hill: Top Investigation Developments September 2026

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This is an overview of important developments in investigative activity on Capitol Hill from the past month. Investigations into AI companies and infrastructure ramped up, drawing support from both sides of the aisle. Democrats in both Chambers of Congress continued to express interest in investigating private sector business with the Trump Administration. As prediction market platforms continue to rapidly expand, so do congressional inquiries into the industry.

1. Escalating Scrutiny of AI Companies

On September 10, Senator Josh Hawley (R-MO) opened an investigation into OpenAI following reports that the company's AI agents hacked Hugging Face, Inc., a computational tools company, in July 2026. According to Senator Hawley's letter to Sam Altman, CEO of OpenAI, and the company's report of the incident, a swarm of more than 1,200 AI agents broke out of their contained testing environment and approximately 700 of those agents went on to launch a coordinated attack on Hugging Face, gaining access to its private source code.¹ In his letter, Senator Hawley expressed concern about the "autonomous collusion and subversion of human oversight" exhibited by these AI models, and described the company's actions after reportedly learning about the incident as "reckless." The letter seeks detailed information and the production of documents from OpenAI about its AI agents and the unauthorized hack of Hugging Face, Inc.

AI companies continue to draw bipartisan scrutiny. On September 26, Ranking Member of the House Financial Services Committee Maxine Waters (D-CA) issued a statement "in response to alarming new reports involving OpenAI agents targeting federal government websites."² On September 28, three Democratic Members sent a letter to OpenAI, Anthropic, Google, and Meta seeking "a complete inventory of every known instance in which a model or agent [that the companies] developed gained, or attempted to gain unauthorized access to a system, network account, or service."³

2. Probe of Big Tech Non-Disclosure Agreements (NDAs) and Data Centers

Ranking Member of the House Judiciary Committee Jamie Raskin (D-MD) launched an investigation on September 29 into Amazon, Google, Meta, and Oracle over the companies' alleged use of NDAs in communities with data center projects.⁴ In his letters to the companies, Ranking Member Raskin raised specific concerns about the ability of residents in these communities to learn about how data centers could affect their utility bills, environment, and health, in light of these agreements. Ranking Member Raskin framed the NDAs as "gag orders" that "deprive residents" of the ability to hold officials who approve these projects accountable and to protect their communities, and lists company-specific concerns. The Minority is requesting production of any non-disclosure or confidentiality agreement the companies have with public officials along with information on the projected impact data centers will have on communities and the reasons behind the companies' use of NDAs.

¹ <https://www.hawley.senate.gov/wp-content/uploads/2026/09/2026-09-10-Hawley-Letter-to-OpenAI-re-Hugging-Face-AI-Agent-Hack.pdf>; <https://openai.com/index/hugging-face-incident-and-the-road-ahead/>

² <https://democrats-financialservices.house.gov/news/documentsingle.aspx?DocumentID=415405>

³ https://d12t4t5x3vyizu.cloudfront.net/gottheimer.house.gov/uploads/2026/09/Letter-to-AI-Companies-on-Hacking-Incidents_final.pdf

⁴ <https://democrats-judiciary.house.gov/media-center/press-releases/ranking-member-raskin-probes-big-tech-s-use-of-non-disclosure-agreements-to-prevent-local-officials-from-discussing-data-center-projects-with-constituents>

3. Expanding Oversight of Prediction Market Platforms

On September 29, Chairman of the House Oversight Committee (“Oversight Committee”) James Comer (R-KY) widened a probe into the misuse of online prediction markets. In letters to three additional platforms, the Chairman requested documents and information on how each uses identity verification to detect and prevent insider trading.⁵ According to the Chairman, the goal is to determine “whether these platforms are fulfilling their legal obligations and doing enough to identify and prevent insider trading before it happens.”⁶ The letters build on the Chairman's engagement earlier this year with two prominent prediction markets, which received similar requests. According to the Chairman, the Committee has already “received nearly 1,000 documents and five briefings” from those platforms’ representatives.”⁷ As this industry rapidly expands and insider trading allegations mount, congressional scrutiny will continue to grow.

4. Continued Interest in Private Sector Ties to the Trump Administration

Democrats in both Chambers continue to lay the groundwork for investigations into private sector companies and organizations who have conducted business with the Administration, previewing what a Democratic investigative agenda could look like should control of either the House or Senate change after the Midterm elections. There were two developments in September continuing this trend.

First, on September 13, four Democratic Senators sent a letter to Freedom 250, a public-private partnership created in 2025 to plan and lead national celebrations for the 250th anniversary of American independence, seeking disclosure of the identities of its corporate donors. The letter criticizes Freedom 250's alleged “lack of transparency” in donations made to the entity, and an accompanying press release characterizes Freedom 250 as “a slush fund for President Trump’s pay-to-play politics.”⁸ The purpose of this letter, according to the Senators, is to identify “whether donors [with ongoing business with the federal government] received any favors or special treatment in exchange for their donations.”⁹

Second, on September 28, Democrats on the House Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence issued a press release stating that the Committee is “very likely to investigate corrupt dealings with the private sector.”¹⁰ The release accompanied a letter sent by the Minority to the National Defense Industrial Association (NDIA), a trade organization which represents many companies with federal contracts, alerting NDIA that the Committee may seek documents, communications, transcribed testimony, and other information to assess corporate donations given to the White House Ballroom project and contracts awarded to Intelligence Community contractors.¹¹

⁵ <https://oversight.house.gov/release/comer-continues-investigation-into-insider-trading-on-online-prediction-market-platforms/>

⁶ *Id.*

⁷ *Id.*

⁸ <https://www.warren.senate.gov/wp-content/uploads/2026/09/Letter-from-Senators-Warren-and-Schiff-Freedom-250-on-Corporate-Donations-and-Potential-Pay-to-Play.pdf>; <https://www.warren.senate.gov/newsroom/press-releases/warren-schiff-padilla-blumenthal-demand-freedom-250-disclose-donations-raise-concerns-over-whether-organization-was-a-slush-fund-for-trump-corruption-pay-to-play-politics/>

⁹ *Id.*

¹⁰ <https://democrats-intelligence.house.gov/news/documentsingle.aspx?DocumentID=1508>

¹¹ https://democrats-intelligence.house.gov/uploadedfiles/ndia_final.pdf

5. New Developments in Investigations into the Cryptocurrency Industry

On September 15, Senator Elizabeth Warren (D-MA) asked the Treasury Secretary and the Attorney General to investigate a cryptocurrency firm partly owned by a politically prominent family.¹² The letter renews earlier calls this year for government oversight of the firm, now framed as a matter of "national security."¹³ It cites "reports that [the firm] may have solicited and received \$100 million from a businessman known publicly and confirmed in July 2026 to be under investigation for money laundering."

On September 28, Democrats on the Senate's Permanent Subcommittee on Investigations released a report on cryptocurrency and Iran's shadow banking network. The Subcommittee's Ranking Member Richard Blumenthal (D-CT) described the report as analyzing how a widely used stablecoin has "become a significant financial lifeline within Iran's shadow banking network."¹⁴ The report is part of an ongoing inquiry into cryptocurrency's role in illicit finance. It also shows that the minority party, despite lacking the power to compel documents or testimony, can still put an issue squarely in the public spotlight.

6. Oversight of the Use of Algorithmic Pricing Continues

On September 9, Chairman Comer with the House Oversight Committee, in a letter to FTC Chairman Andrew Ferguson, requested a staff briefing on the Commission's new proposed policy statement on so-called "surveillance pricing" practices which use algorithms and consumer data to adjust prices.¹⁵ This letter continues the House Oversight Committee's investigation, launched in March, into the potential unfair impact that these types of pricing models may have on American consumers.¹⁶ Congressional investigations into "surveillance pricing" models span industries, draw bipartisan support, and have included major airlines, grocers, retailers, and pharmacies, as seen by earlier inquiries from Democrats.¹⁷

¹² <https://www.banking.senate.gov/imo/media/doc/20260915letter tobessent andblancheonaqua1.pdf>

¹³ <https://www.banking.senate.gov/newsroom/minority/ahead-of-committee-crypto-market-structure-markup-warren-and-reed-call-for-investigation-into-world-liberty-financials-latest-apparent-failure-to-detect-ties-to-sanctioned-criminals>

¹⁴ <https://www.blumenthal.senate.gov/newsroom/press/release/blumenthal-releases-psi-report-detailing-how-lutnick-linked-crypto-firm-tether-props-up-irans-shadow-banking-system>

¹⁵ https://oversight.house.gov/wp-content/uploads/2026/09/Letter-to-FTC-Ferguson_9.9.2026.pdf

¹⁶ <https://oversight.house.gov/release/comer-investigates-use-of-artificial-intelligence-to-set-prices-for-consumers/>

¹⁷ <https://democrats-energycommerce.house.gov/media/press-releases/pallone-launches-surveillance-pricing-inquiry>; <https://democrats-energycommerce.house.gov/media/press-releases/pallone-presses-us-airlines-answers-surveillance-pricing>

CONTACT

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