

## Prepping For White House's Proposed AI Framework

By **Dion Bregman** and **David Mendelsohn** (April 13, 2026, 5:57 PM EDT)

On March 20, the White House issued a national artificial intelligence legislative framework. While the framework does not create immediate compliance obligations, it signals a growing push to replace the emerging patchwork of state AI laws with a more uniform federal approach.

Companies should prepare for continued overlap between state requirements and potential federal legislation, and monitor how the U.S. Congress responds to this evolving policy direction.

The White House's new national artificial intelligence legislative framework does not change the law, but materially reframes the policy landscape. The administration is urging Congress to adopt a federal AI rulebook, avoid a state-by-state compliance patchwork and preserve a comparatively light-touch federal approach built around six policy areas: child protection, electricity costs, intellectual property, free speech concerns and education.

A discussion draft by Sen. Marsha Blackburn, R-Tenn., is currently the clearest example of how the administration's framework could be translated into statutory text, but it is only one of several emerging legislative signals, as other lawmakers are also expected to shape the direction of federal AI legislation.



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### What Happened

On March 20, the White House released its legislative recommendations for a national AI policy framework, accompanied by a public announcement urging Congress to establish such a framework. The framework argues that a fragmented landscape of state AI laws risks undermining innovation, competitiveness and national policy coherence.

The recommendations are organized around six major themes: protecting children and empowering parents; managing energy and electricity impacts; addressing intellectual property issues; preventing AI-enabled censorship of lawful speech; supporting AI education and workforce readiness; and favoring a lighter-touch federal approach over a new standalone AI regulator.

The framework also expressly calls on Congress to preempt state AI laws deemed unduly burdensome or inconsistent with federal policy, while preserving room for certain generally applicable state laws and

state control over procurement and internal governmental use of AI.

## **Why It Matters**

The most immediate business issue is preemption. The administration has now made clear that it views a patchwork of state AI laws as a barrier to innovation and national competitiveness.

Even though no new federal statute has been enacted, the framework signals that federal displacement of at least some state AI rules is now a top federal policy objective.

At the same time, the framework is not self-executing. Congress would need to enact legislation, and the early political reporting suggests that broad preemption will be a difficult sell, not only because Democrats are unlikely to support a sweeping override of state authority, but also because some Republicans have differed on how far federal law should go.

At its core, AI policy in the 119th Congress hasn't been a strictly partisan issue, making for interesting coalitions, but also making it harder to forecast how legislative proposals will advance.

Before the framework's release, preemption was already one of the core sticking points on Capitol Hill, and the U.S. House of Representatives and Senate remain far apart on a possible child-safety package.[1]

Since the rollout, Rep. Deborah Ross, D-N.C., has publicly defended state authority to regulate AI in areas tied to public safety,[2] and Sen. Josh Hawley, R-Mo., has likewise signaled resistance to broad displacement of state safeguards,[3] even while supporting stronger federal rules in targeted areas such as child safety.

The White House itself has implicitly acknowledged the political sensitivity of the issue: OSTP Director Michael Kratsios said the administration views preemption as a give-and-take that must be paired with carveouts for matters such as child safety and state procurement, rather than as an unlimited federal override.[4]

That leaves companies in a transitional posture. Existing state laws remain operative unless and until Congress acts, but the White House has now invited Congress to revisit how much of that state-law architecture should survive.

## **Key Takeaways**

***Federal law has not changed yet.***

The White House framework is a legislative blueprint, not enacted law. Companies should not treat it as creating immediate federal compliance obligations.

***Preemption is now the central policy issue.***

The administration is pressing Congress to replace at least part of the emerging state-by-state AI compliance landscape with a uniform federal framework.

***The proposed federal model is comparatively light-touch.***

The framework advises against creating a new federal AI regulator and instead favors oversight through existing agencies, sector-specific governance and industry-led standards.

***State authority would likely remain in important areas.***

The framework contemplates preserving certain generally applicable state laws, as well as state authority over procurement, infrastructure and governmental use of AI. Even if Congress acts, many businesses may still face a mixed federal-state regime.

***Blackburn's draft is the most concrete legislative signal so far.***

Blackburn's discussion draft bill would "promote innovation in artificial intelligence and safeguard children, creators, communities and stop censorship," offering a working example of how the administration's policy objectives could be translated into statutory language, while other lawmakers, including Senate Commerce Committee Chairman Ted Cruz, R-Texas, are expected to advance additional proposals.

**Democrat Negotiation**

In practical terms, any Senate AI package moving this year would likely need at least some Democratic support, and current signals suggest Democrats are more likely to engage on targeted federal guardrails than on sweeping preemption of state law.

The available reporting does not show a unified Democratic position against all federal AI legislation. Rather, the sharper fault line is over preemption. Rep. Ross has argued that the Constitution protects substantial state authority in this area,[5] and a coalition of House Democrats, joined in the Senate by Sen. Brian Schatz, D-Hawaii, has already introduced legislation that would expressly bar federal preemption of state AI laws.[6]

At the same time, House Democratic leadership has launched a dedicated AI commission and has emphasized the need for clear, enforceable rules, while also saying Congress should learn from state and local efforts rather than impose blanket moratoriums.[7]

Accordingly, the better near-term read is that Democrats may negotiate over narrower issues such as child safety, digital replicas or other issue-specific protections, but broad federal displacement of state AI regimes is likely to face substantial resistance and could lengthen the legislative timeline.

Finally, congressional Democrats, anticipating a return to the majority, at least in one chamber, may decide it's more advantageous to wait until after the midterms to engage in bipartisan negotiations.

**Strategic Insight**

The White House framework matters less for what it does today than for how it reorders the AI policy debate. Until now, many companies have approached U.S. AI governance primarily as a state-law tracking and implementation challenge.

The March 20 framework adds a second, more strategic variable: whether portions of that state law buildout may ultimately be narrowed, displaced or restructured by federal legislation.

That shift has practical implications for legal, compliance and government affairs teams. Businesses that have been investing heavily in state-specific AI governance programs may now need to assess whether certain controls should be built for durability across both state and possible future federal frameworks.

At the same time, because preemption faces political resistance and no bill has been enacted, companies cannot assume simplification is imminent. In the near term, the more realistic outlook is continued overlap: active state-law compliance coupled with closer attention to federal legislative developments.

From a compliance design perspective, this may require companies to move away from highly state-specific controls toward more modular or baseline governance frameworks that can be adapted as federal standards emerge.

For example, organizations may prioritize enterprisewide AI risk classification, documentation and testing protocols that can be mapped to multiple regulatory regimes, rather than building bespoke controls tied to individual state statutes.

As we await additional legislative proposals, Blackburn's draft suggests that any ultimate federal legislation may not rely on a single blunt preemption clause. Instead, Congress may pursue targeted provisions, tailored savings clauses and issue-specific federal standards.

That approach would likely create immediate interpretive questions over the scope of any preemption, the continued role of generally applicable state laws and the extent to which specific state AI statutes survive.

Different legislative outcomes could also drive divergent compliance strategies. If Congress enacts broad preemption with a uniform federal standard, companies may be able to rationalize and streamline existing state-law compliance programs.

By contrast, a narrower or issue-specific preemption model would likely require maintaining dual-track compliance programs, where companies continue to operationalize state requirements while layering in new federal obligations in discrete areas such as child safety, digital replicas or AI transparency.

## **Looking Ahead**

Companies should watch three near-term developments: whether congressional committees begin converting the White House framework into legislative text, whether the preemption concept narrows as lawmakers respond to bipartisan resistance, and whether Blackburn's discussion draft becomes a vehicle for combining child safety, digital replica, censorship and broader AI governance provisions into a single federal package.

In the interim, companies may also consider pressure-testing their current AI governance programs against multiple regulatory scenarios, including identifying which controls are jurisdiction-specific versus globally scalable, evaluating whether existing documentation and audit trails would satisfy potential federal standards, and aligning legal, compliance and public policy teams around a unified strategy for engaging with both state regulators and federal policymakers.

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[1] <https://www.axios.com/2026/03/19/white-house-rollout-ai-framework>.

[2] <https://ross.house.gov/2025/12/ross-leads-letter-from-women-lawmakers-opposing-proposed-ai-moratorium-that-would-jeopardize-protections-for-women-and-girls>.

[3] <https://www.hawley.senate.gov/hawley-bill-to-protect-children-from-ai-chatbots-gains-new-cosponsors/>.

[4] <https://www.nextgov.com/artificial-intelligence/2026/03/white-house-official-advocates-give-and-take-state-ai-preemption/412407/>.

[5] <https://www.axios.com/2026/03/26/axios-aidc-summit-the-us-constitution-should-protect-state-level-ai-regulation-rep-ross-says>.

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