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POLITICS

It's about to get easier for Trump to fire federal workers

FEBRUARY 6, 2026 - 10:42 AM ET



Andrea Hsu

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President Trump gestures as he boards Air Force One on Jan. 13.

Mandel Ngan/AP Photo. Via Getty Images

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In October 2020, President Trump unveiled a plan to grant himself the power to fire vast numbers of civil servants for any reason should they get in the way of his agenda.

Reject All

Five and a half years later, that plan has come to fruition, despite vast public opposition.

Accept All

Starting March 9, an unspecified number of federal employees could lose their current job protections and be converted into at-will employees at Trump's discretion. That's according to a final rule issued Friday by the Office of Personnel Management (OPM), the agency that handles many human resources functions for the federal government.

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POLITICS

Trump loves saying 'You're fired.' Now he's making it easier to fire federal workers



President Trump is rolling out changes that would make it

easier to fire federal

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Under current law, the civil service is meant to be apolitical, providing continuity

for the government from one presidential administration to another. But over the past year, Trump has shown a willingness — and at times an eagerness — to fire those career federal employees whom he perceives as political opponents, such as rank-and-file Justice Department attorneys involved in Jan. 6 prosecutions.

The rule would make firing such staff much easier. Titled "Improving Performance, Accountability and Responsiveness in the Civil Service," it allows for the president

to move federal employees in "policy-influencing" roles into a new category of employees called Schedule Policy/Career. OPM previously estimated some 50,000 positions could be reclassified.

The rule explains that while federal agencies will review their workforces and ask OPM to recommend positions be moved, the president will make the final call on which positions are reclassified.

OPM received more than 40,000 comments during the public comment period — 94% of which opposed the rule. The administration chalked up a lot of the opposition to misunderstandings — of existing federal laws and of the intentions of the rule.

The Trump administration has argued that the change is a necessary step to make the bureaucracy more efficient and accountable, citing the widely held sentiment that it's too hard for the government to fire poor performers, as well as reports of federal employees "slow walking" or otherwise obstructing Trump's directives.

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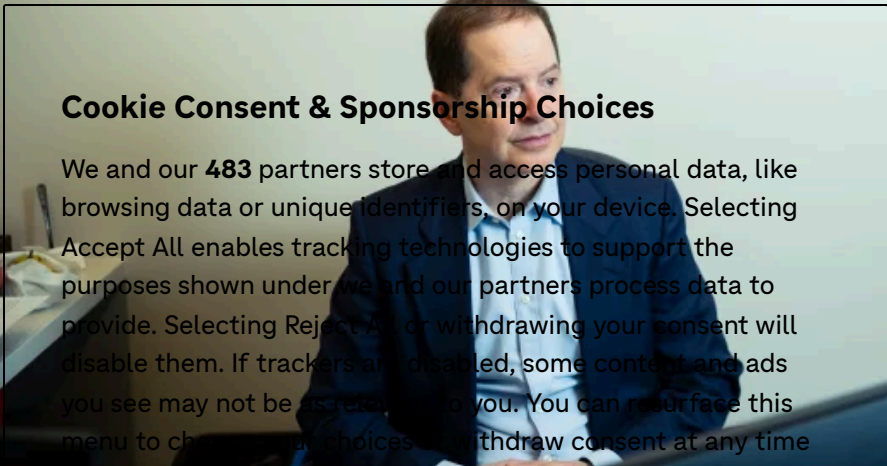
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The president's critics say the rule further allows Trump — and any future president — to politicize the civil service, and they warn of consequences for the American people.

"Our government needs serious improvements to make it more effective and accountable. The notion that it exists to serve the American people and not any individual president," said Max Stier, president of our partner, the Public Service in a statement. "This new designation can be used to remove expert career federal employees who place the law and service to the public ahead of blind loyalty and replace them with political supporters who will unquestioningly do the president's bidding."

“The vigor of government is essential to the security of liberty.”

-ALEXANDER HAMILTON



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Unclear which positions or how many will be reclassified

It remains unclear which positions will be subject to reclassification. The rule applies to "policy-influencing positions" which, according to the 255-page document, would include supervisors of individuals and content, advertising and content measurement, audience research and services development.

In the rule, OPM insists that "the vast majority" of those appointed under Schedule Policy/Career will still be protected from prohibited personnel practices including retaliation against whistleblowing. However, they will no longer be able to file complaints with the Merit Systems Protection Board, the federal agency that hears employee challenges to personnel actions. The Office of Special Counsel, which investigates whistleblower complaints, no longer operates independently since Trump's firing last year of the Senate-confirmed leader of that agency.

Currently, around 4,000 political appointees within the federal government can be fired at will, a number Stier says is already far higher than in other democracies.



POLITICS

Beyond 'draining the swamp': How Trump is knocking down checks on presidential power

While reclassified employees would theoretically retain the right to file discrimination complaints with the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, the rule notes that the president himself is not subject to federal employment anti-discrimination laws.

Legal challenges ahead

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The rule, which was first announced last year, already faces multiple lawsuits, including one filed by Democracy Forward. The legal organization has filed numerous lawsuits seeking to block the Trump administration's overhaul of the federal government.

This is a deliberate attempt to do through regulation what the law does not allow — strip public servants of their rights and make it easier to fire them for political reasons and harm the American people through doing so," said Skye Perryman, the group's president and CEO, in a statement. "We have successfully fought this kind of power grab before, and we will fight this again."

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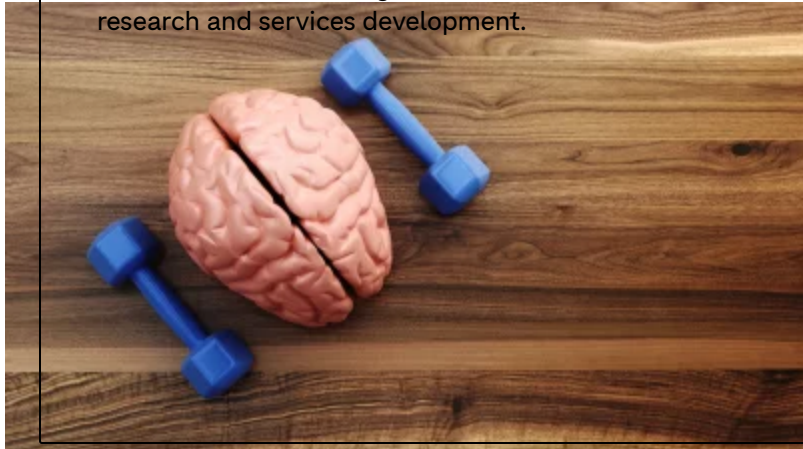
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CODE SWITCH

Trump shared a racist "joke." That humor is an American tradition : Code Switch

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NEWS

Justice Department publishes some missing Epstein files related to Trump

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A Trump official quits over the Iran war and Israel kills 2 top Iranian commanders

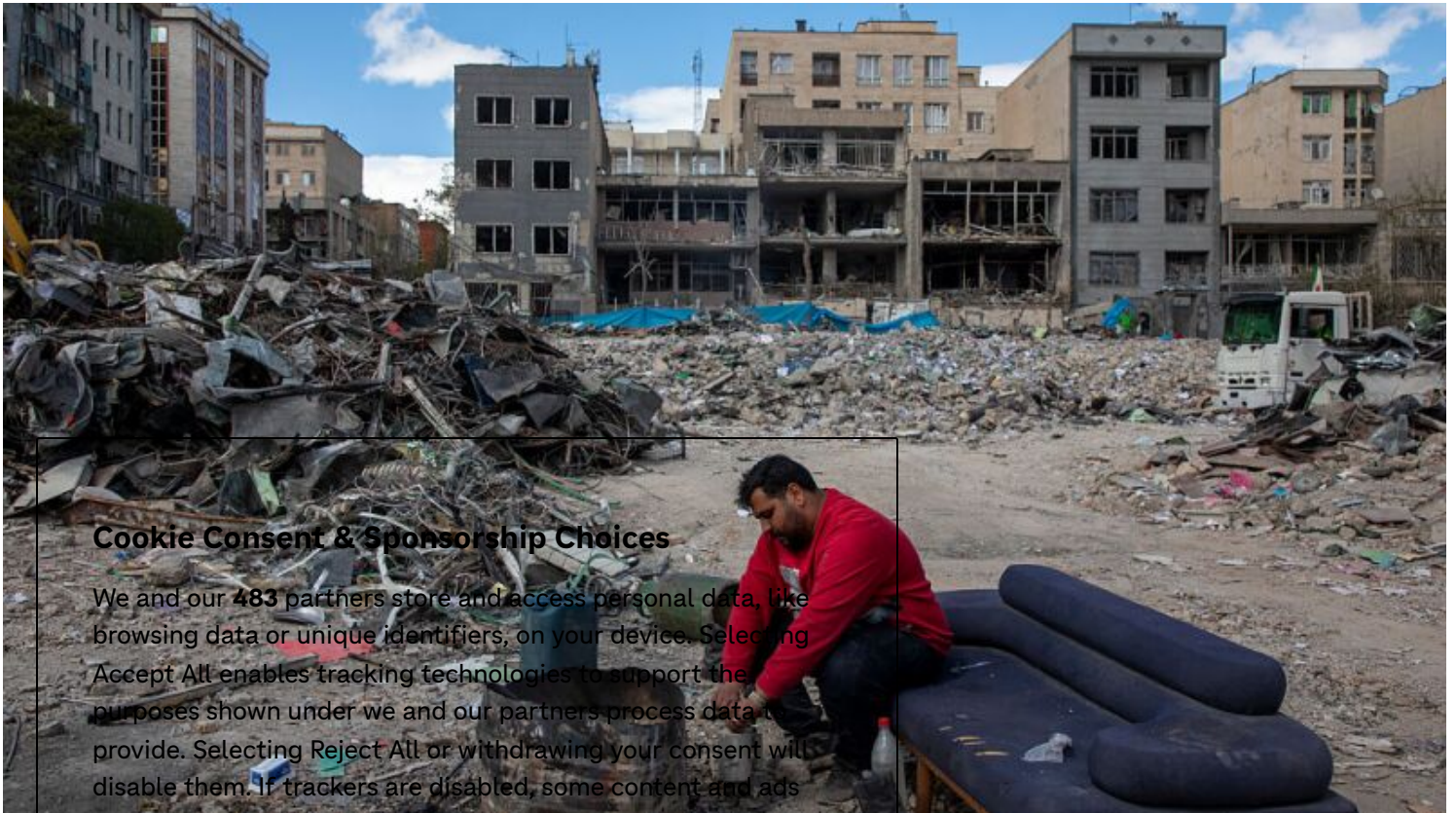
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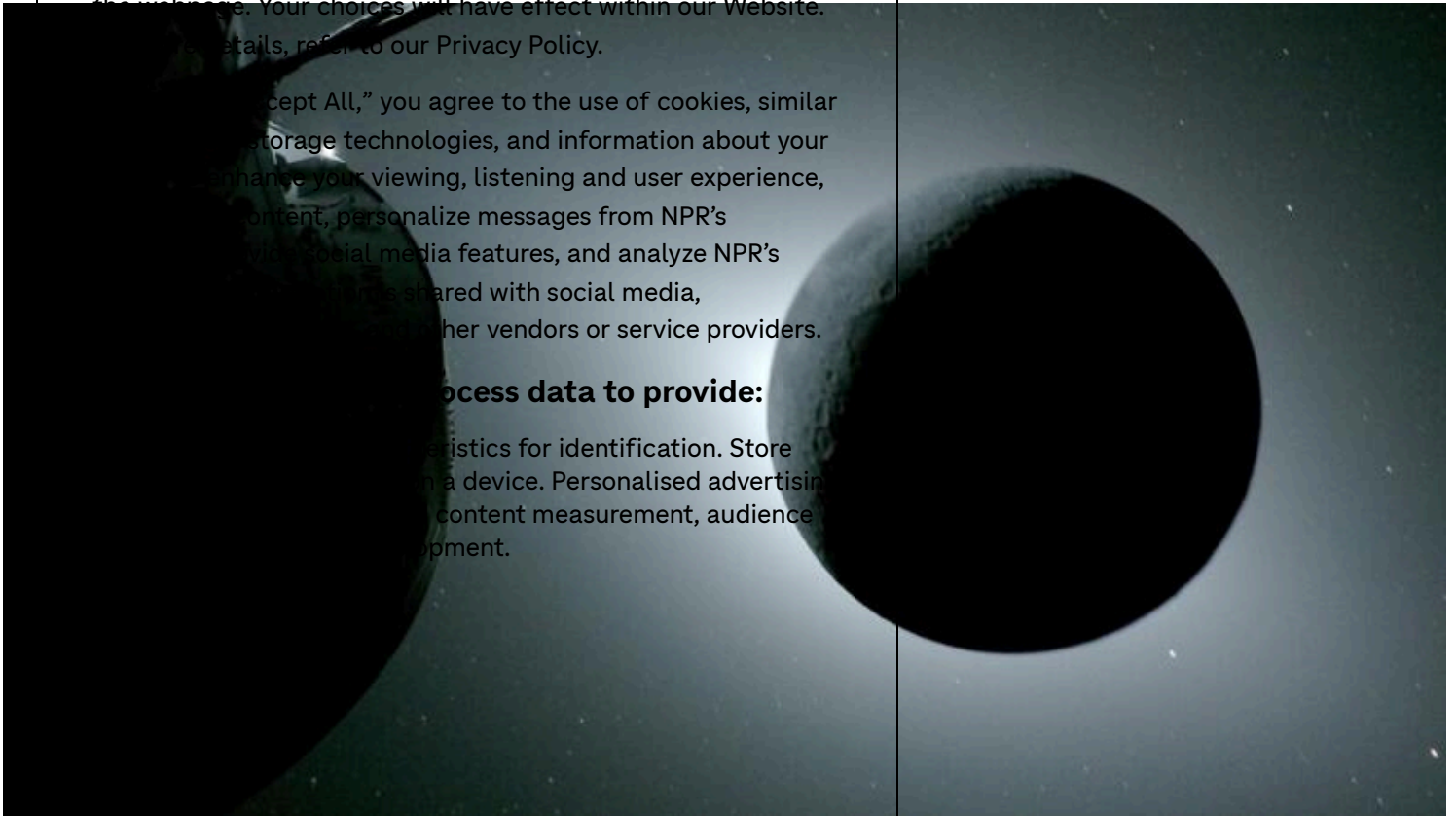
U.S. and Iran agree to 2-week ceasefire, suspending Trump's threat to annihilate Iran

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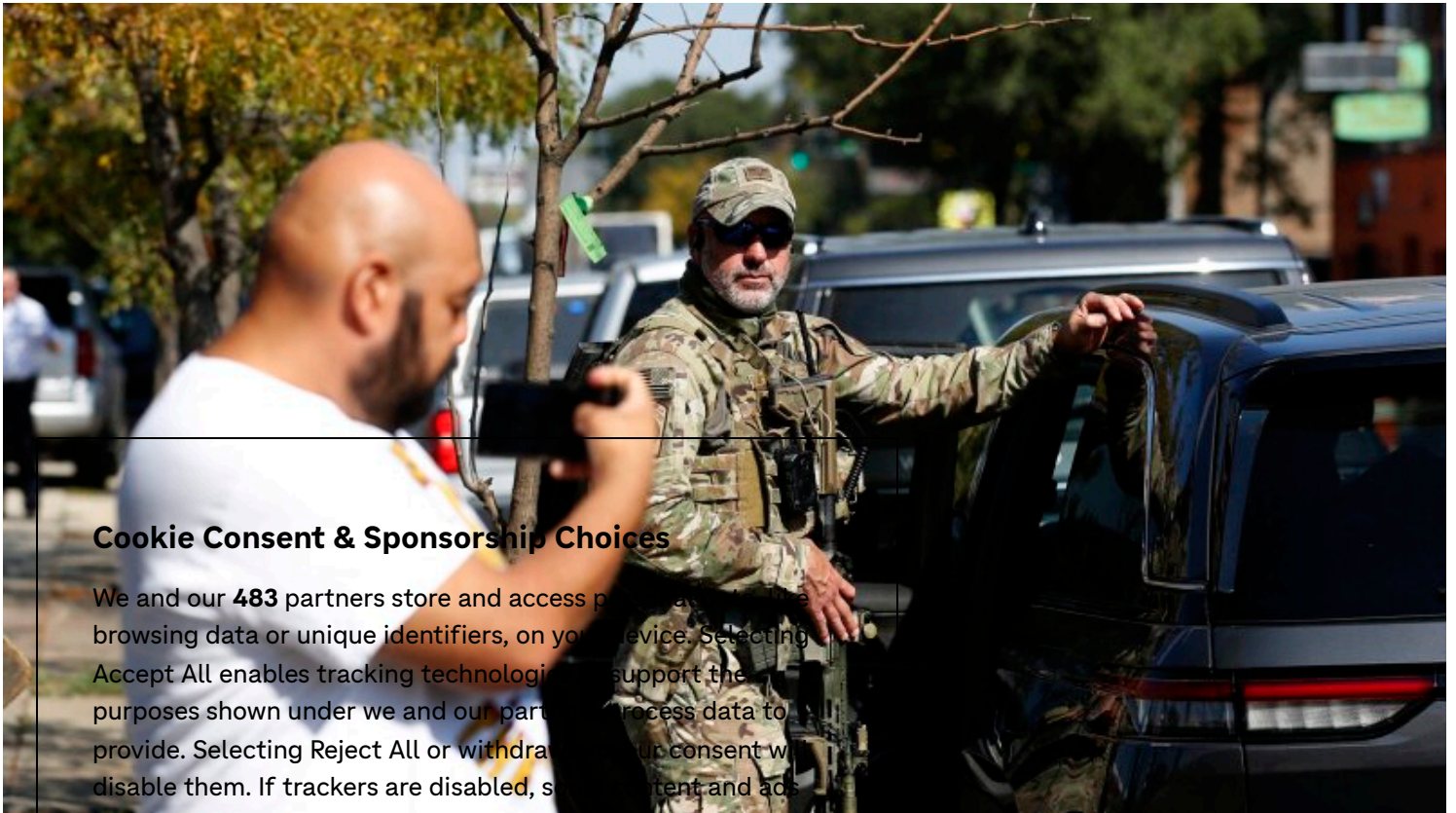
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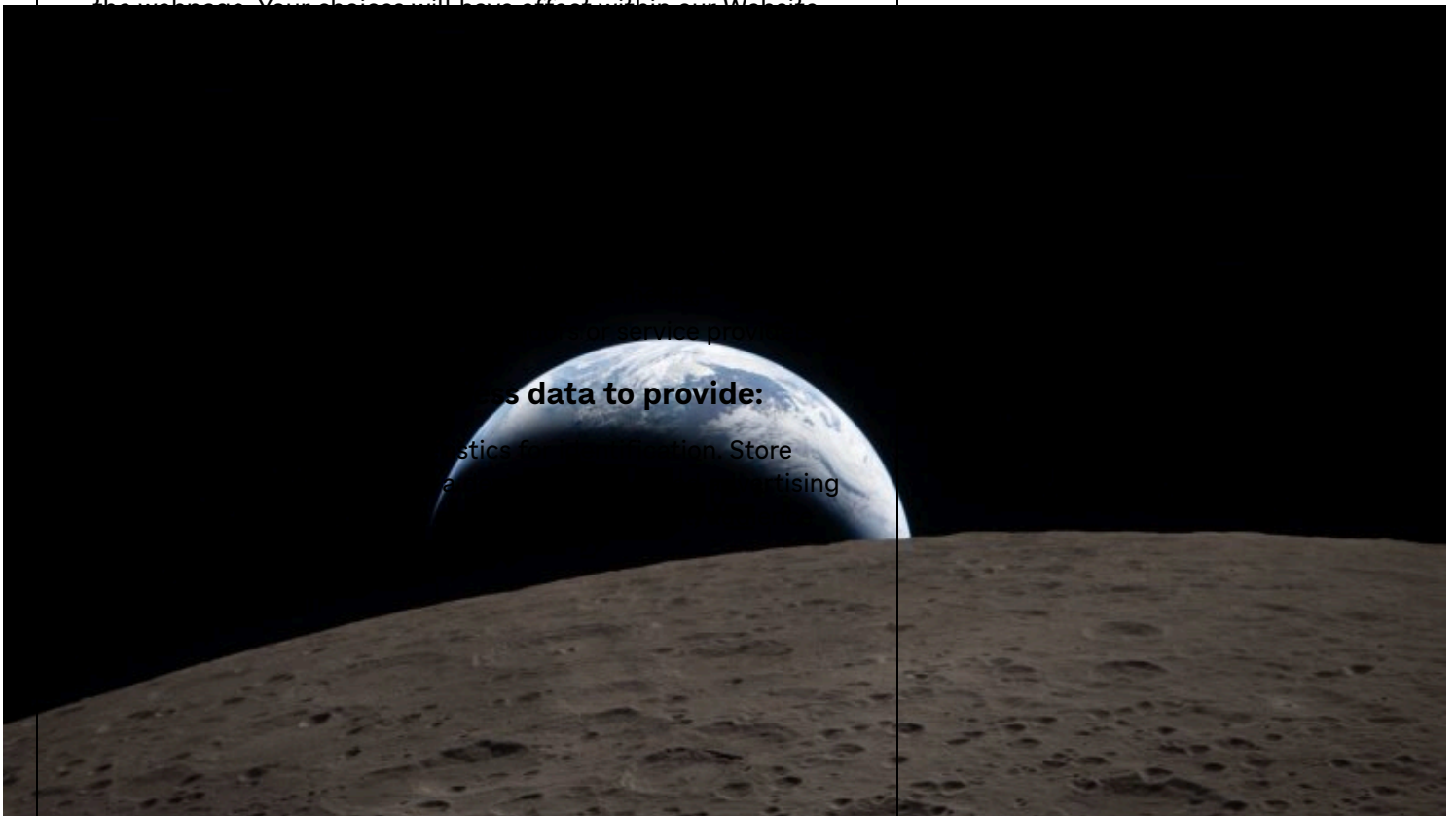


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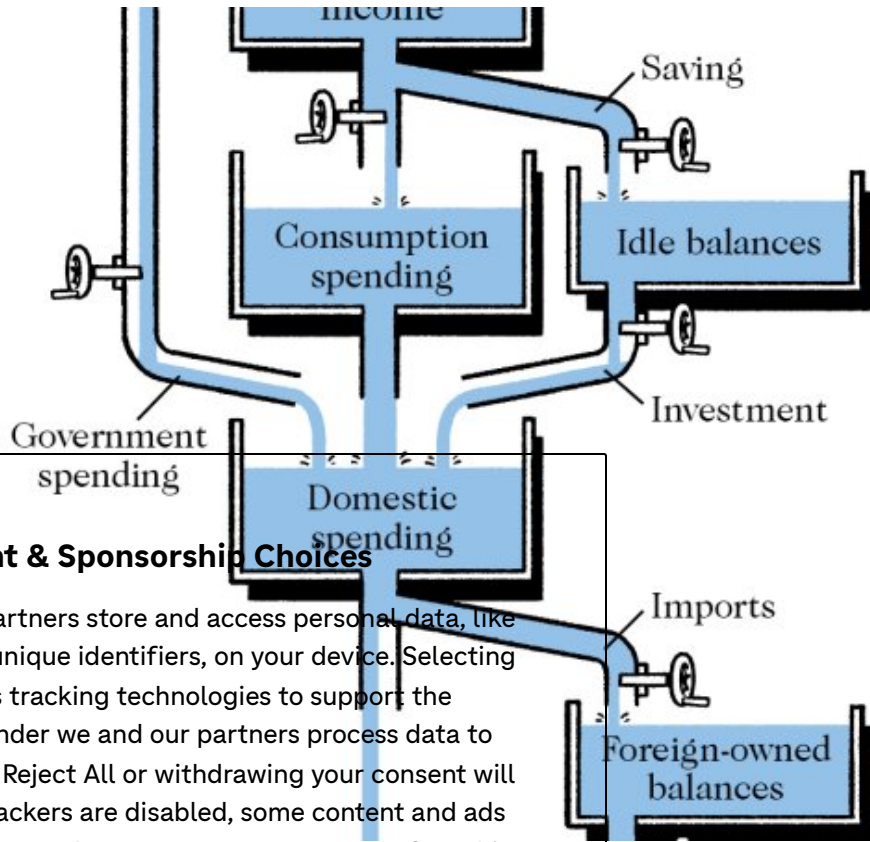
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ICE acknowledges it is using powerful spyware



THE PICTURE SHOW

Photos: NASA releases first images from moon flyby



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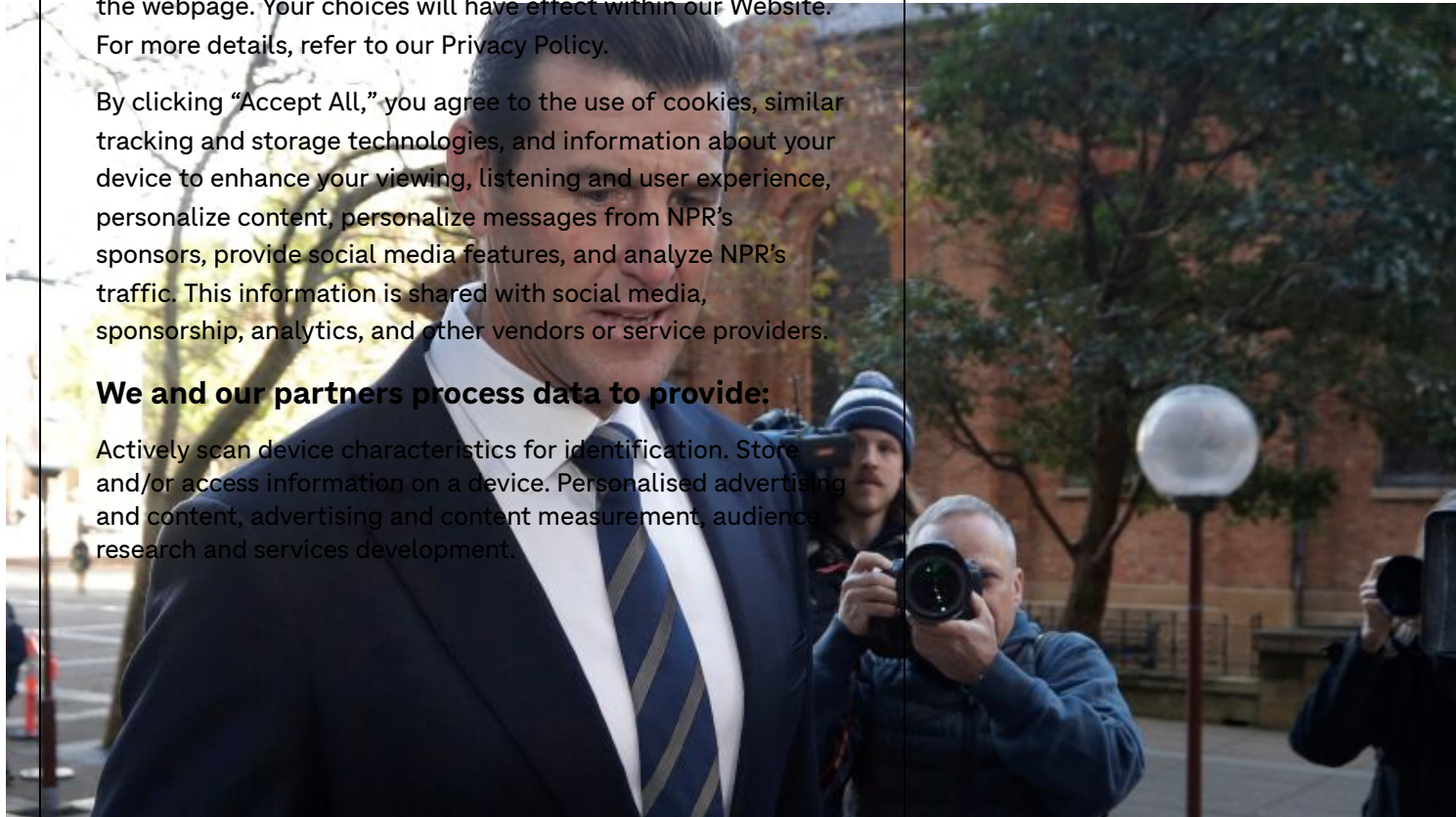
How Bill Phillips used flowing water to model the economy

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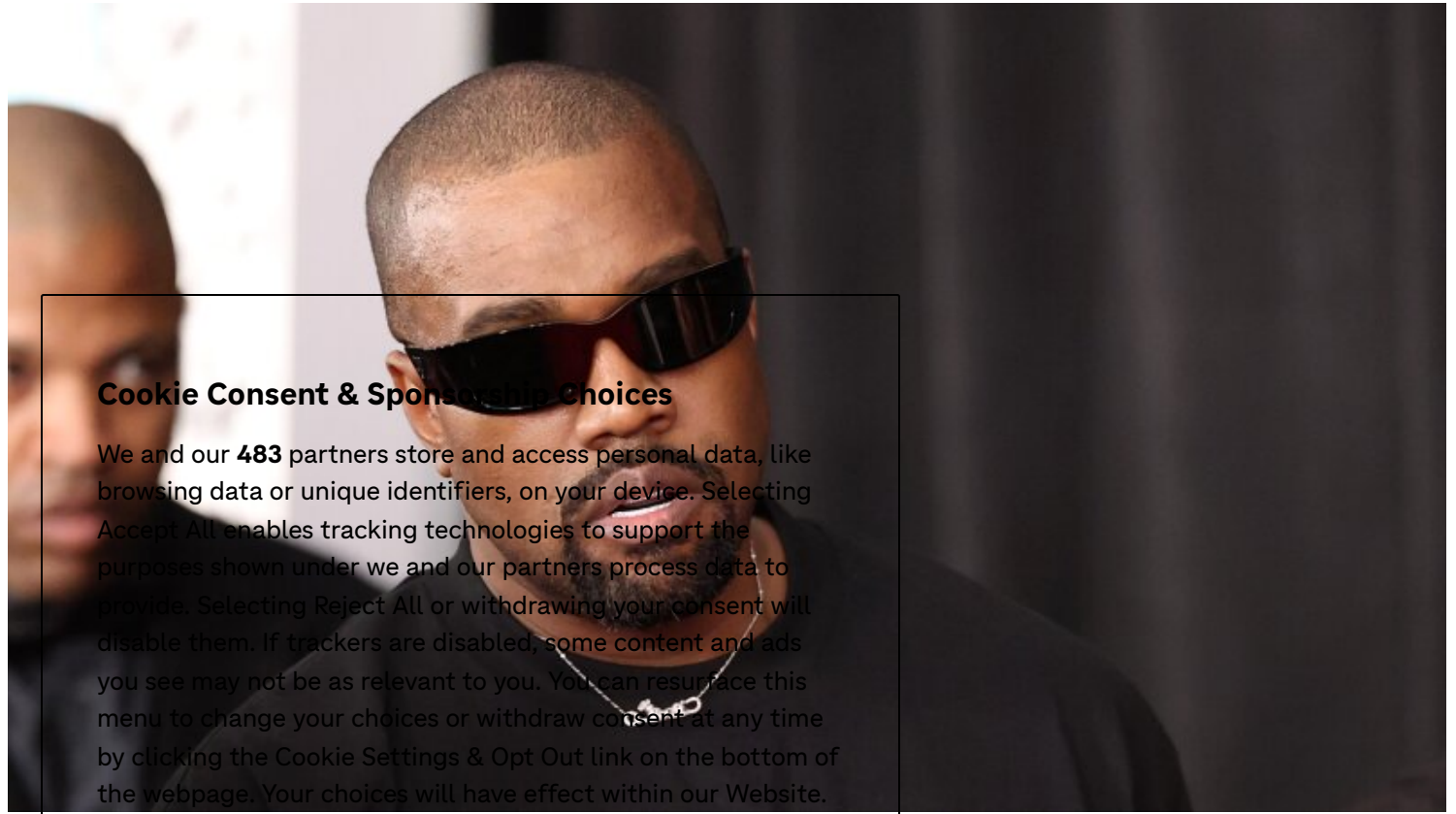
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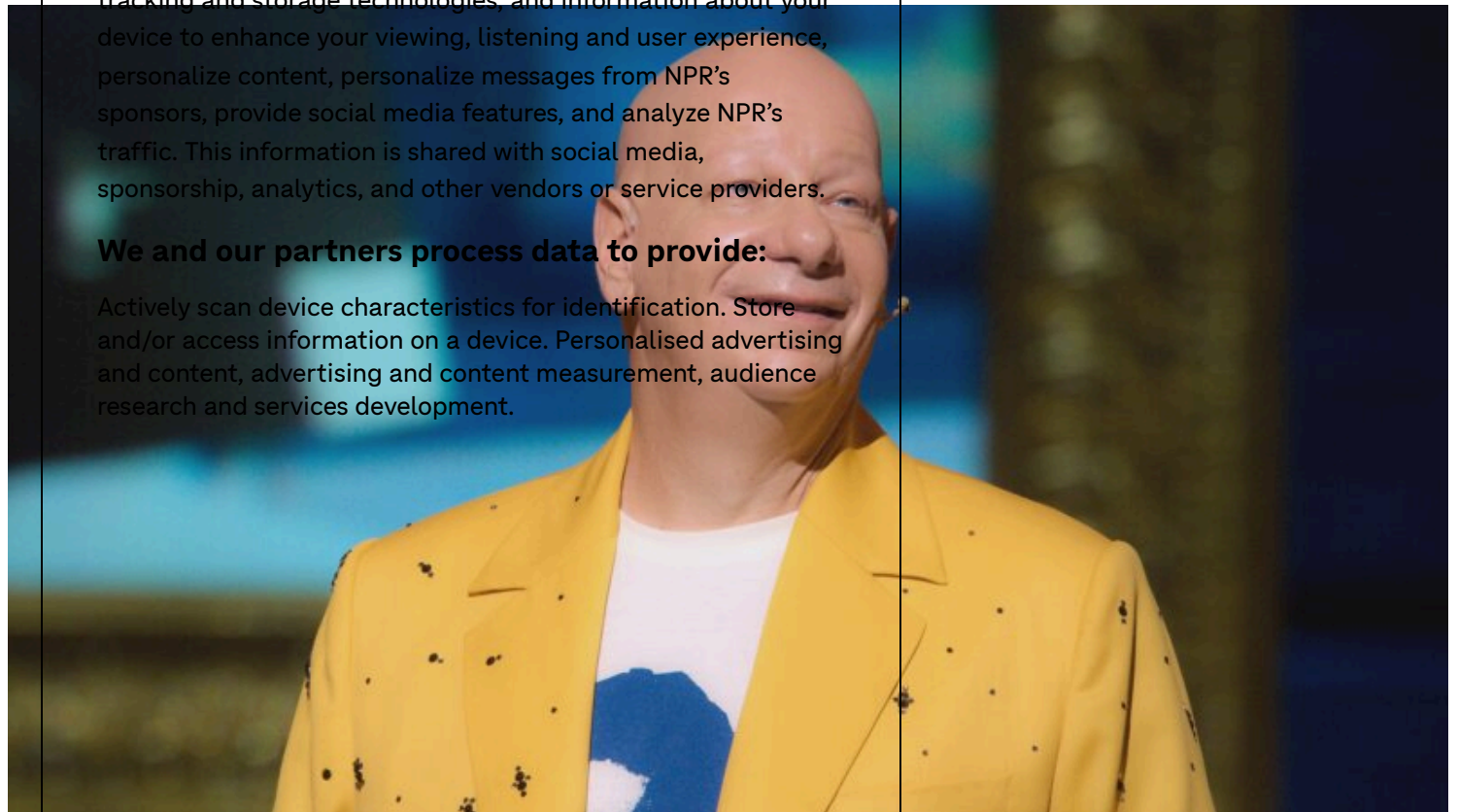
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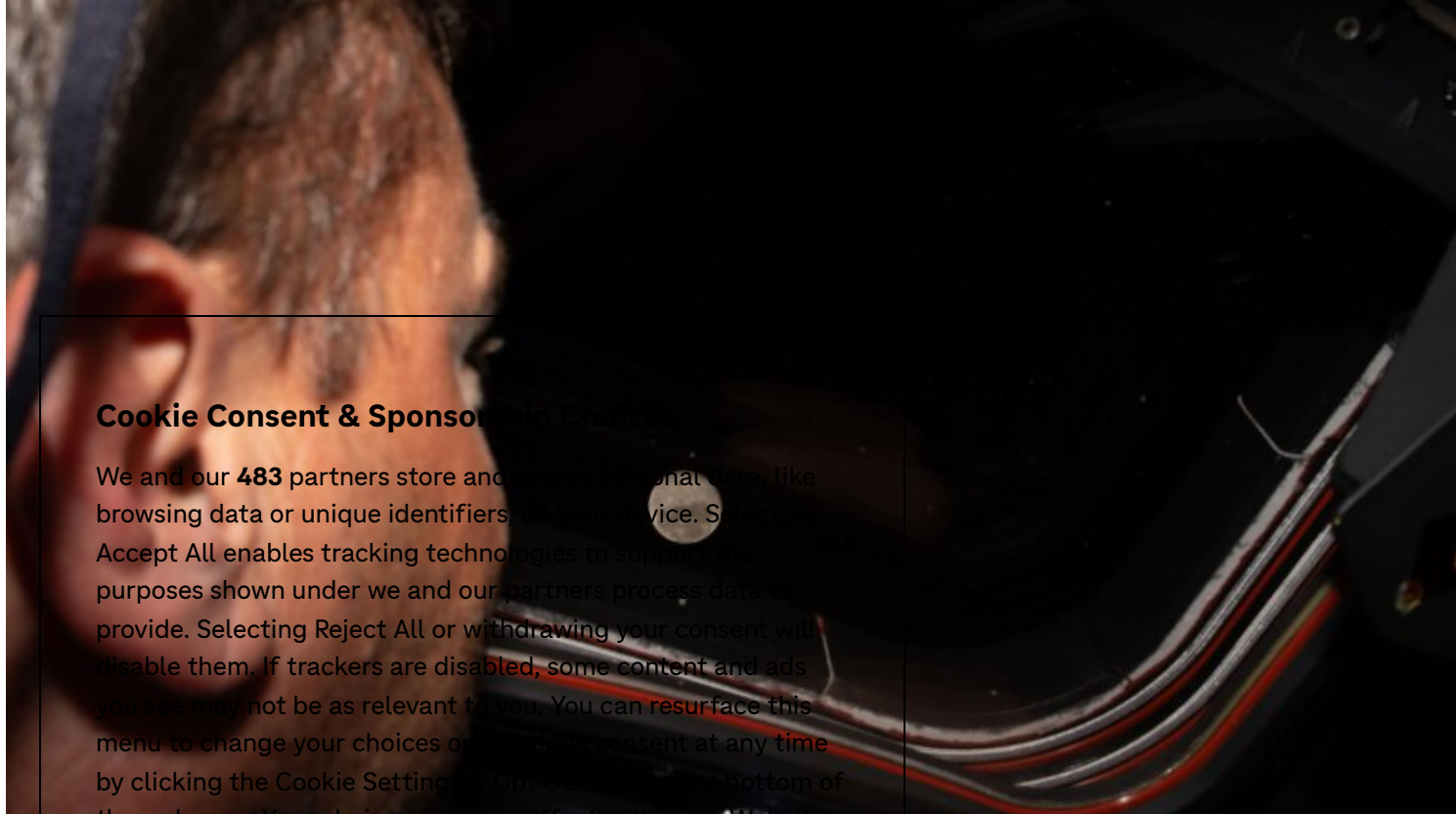
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Astronauts suggest naming a moon crater 'Carroll' after their commander's late wife

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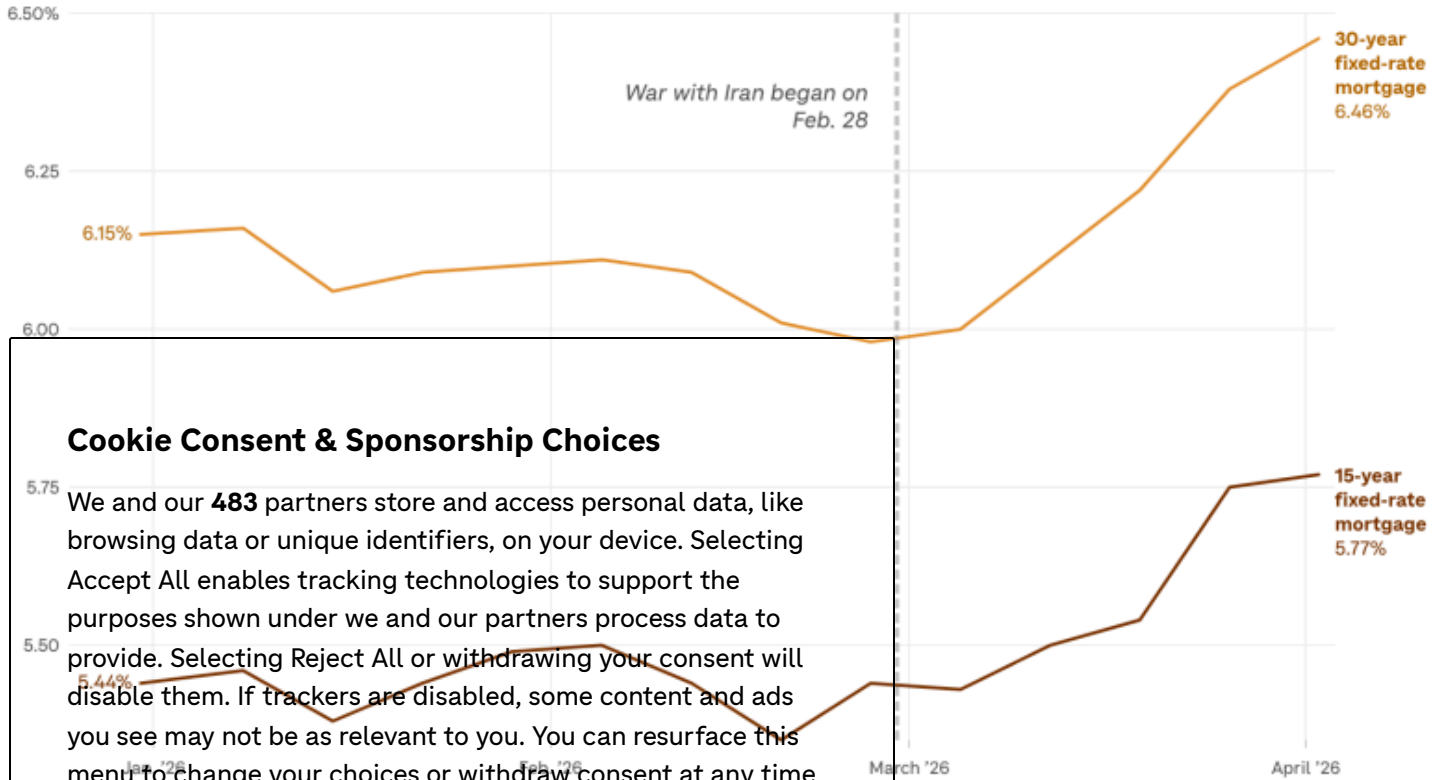


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