

When the Rulebook Becomes the Weapon

By Patrick Russell · September 26, 2026



The article argues that Democrats could use control of Congress to shape AI rules that stifle political and industry opponents.

The ones who wield the power to craft the rules, encouraged financially, and holding legislative control, are easily persuaded to employ strategies to stifle those of trustworthy intentions.

The greatest risk facing AI isn't superintelligence, and it isn't the mass displacement of jobs. It's the prospect of Democrats holding unchecked control over how AI gets regulated.

There's a version of American politics being sold to the public as "accountability." Look closer, and it looks more like a strategy: when you can't win an argument outright, you make the other side too expensive, too exposed, or too entangled in process to keep fighting.

We heard this concern in testimony before the House Judiciary Committee's Weaponization Subcommittee. Senator Chuck Grassley said he had "never seen so much effort" from the FBI, partisan media and some Democratic colleagues to undermine legitimate congressional inquiries. Senator Ron Johnson described what he saw as cooperation among federal officials, media, Big Tech and political operatives. Those

allegations are in the hearing record. Sworn testimony is evidence of what the witnesses said; it does not, by itself, prove a coordinated machine existed.

Now watch where the same instinct could show up next.

House Democrats established a [Litigation and Response Task Force](#) to challenge Trump Administration actions in court; it has already filed briefs and taken public positions. Separately, Democrats are preparing possible [House investigations](#) if they win a majority and gain subpoena power. Oversight is a legitimate congressional power, and genuine misconduct warrants scrutiny. But a strategy built around an onslaught of investigations also raises a fair question: will the machinery pursue facts with a consistent standard, or maximize legal exposure for one man and those around him? The distinction matters before the votes are counted.

AI policy is where a related concern could become less visible. Major AI developers have [proposed registration, reporting and even licensure options for frontier models](#). Such safeguards may address real risks. They may also impose costs that established firms can absorb more

easily than smaller rivals. That potential for regulatory capture deserves examination; an industry proposal alone does not prove a partisan alliance or improper coordination. The EU's [risk-based AI Act](#) shows how consequential classifications, thresholds and compliance obligations can be. Americans should be able to see who proposes comparable U.S. rules, who benefits and who remains accountable to voters.

In my view, AI could become a gateway to malfeasance if Democrats gain unchecked control of its rulebook. Vague safety standards and discretionary licensing could let officials favor allies, burden competitors or subject dissenters to selective scrutiny while calling it public protection. That is a warning about what concentrated power could enable, not a finding that those abuses have already occurred.

Different arenas. A common danger: courts, agencies and rulemaking can entrench outcomes that haven't earned public consent. The response is to scrutinize the process as rigorously as the stated purpose—whether it is called accountability or safety.

Democrats call their efforts oversight. Some Democratic members of the Weaponization Subcommittee called those hearings politically motivated. That disagreement is happening in plain sight. The same standard should apply on both sides: show the evidence, disclose the interests, and ensure no faction gets to write and enforce the rules without meaningful challenge.

Record behind the argument

This is an opinion essay. The hearing establishes what witnesses alleged; the existence of a task force and regulatory proposals is documented. Claims about motive, coordination or future misuse are the author's interpretations and remain open to challenge.

[Grassley's prepared hearing remarks ↗](#)

[Official House hearing transcript ↗](#)

[House Democratic task force description ↗](#)

[Reporting on possible future House investigations ↗](#)

[Frontier AI regulation proposal ↗](#)

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